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*Nature's Comedian.*¹

By W. E. NORRIS.

CHAPTER XXI.

A COUNTRY SUNDAY.

'WELL, my dear,' said Mr. Ormond fretfully, as he stood with his back to the fire and his coat-tails gathered up under his arms, 'I consider that you have been to blame in the matter, and when I think people are to blame I tell 'em so. It has always been my rule, as you know, to say straight out what I think.'

Certainly Mr. Ormond did not often allow misplaced tenderness for the feelings of others to deter him from observing that honest rule, and his wife, generally speaking, accepted his rebukes passively enough, whether they were deserved or not, making due allowance for gout. On the present occasion, however, she felt justified in remarking:

'But, after all, it wasn't I who first invited the young man to call last summer.'

'Now, my dear, what is the sense of making such a shallow excuse as that? I spoke to him at his poor mother's funeral because I thought it was a neighbourly thing to do, and because there was a general feeling against him which seemed to me rather unfair. I believe I did ask him to look us up; but to

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magnify that into an encouragement to him on my part to break Lil's heart is really a little bit too preposterous !'

'I hope and believe he hasn't done that,' Mrs. Ormond returned, with a troubled look ; ' but even if he had, I don't see how I could have helped it.'

'It is a mother's business,' Mr. Ormond declared severely, 'to take care that such things shall not happen. What you can have been thinking about to have him here all day and every day, as you did, I am at a loss to understand !'

This was more than Mrs. Ormond could bear. 'Why, I suppose I was thinking about the very same thing as you were !' the poor lady exclaimed. 'You must have seen as plainly as I did what was going on, and you didn't seem to have any objection. Oh, I know you objected after he put himself forward as the Radical candidate and devoted himself openly to Josephine Gardiner ; but that, unfortunately, was rather late in the day.'

'As if I should ever, under any circumstances, have sanctioned my daughter's engagement to a professional actor !'

'Well, you behaved as if you were ready to sanction it, and I must confess that I thought you were. When all's said, he is a gentleman by birth, though his conduct may not have been that of a gentleman. What consoled and reassured me was that Lilian was evidently disgusted with him. At the time of the election and afterwards she seemed to have got over it and to be quite herself again.'

'H'm !—you won't pretend, I suppose, that she is herself now ?'

'No, I don't ; I only wish I could ! She has been altogether different ever since she went up to London to see him in that wretched play.'

'Ah, just so !—exactly so !—there you are ! Why was she allowed to go ?'

'Because,' answered Mrs. Ormond, gathering up her needle-work and preparing for flight, 'you gave her permission without consulting me. If my opinion had been asked, I should have said it was a risk ; but my opinion, as usual, was not asked, and, as usual, I am scolded because a disaster in which I had no hand has come to pass.'

She got out of the room as quickly as she could after firing that shot, and left her irate spouse to fume on the hearthrug all by himself. Mr. Ormond was very irate and much distressed ; but, being more just at heart than in speech, he was fain to

acknowledge inwardly that his acceptance of Anne Dunville's invitation on his daughter's behalf had been a sad mistake. Bother Anne Dunville!—why the deuce had she ever given that invitation? A sensible sort of woman, too, generally speaking, and not at all given, one would have thought, to laying plots which were absurd upon the face of them. She must have known perfectly well that a match between Lilian and her play-acting brother was out of the question! Such were Mr. Ormond's mental ejaculations; for he did not choose to admit even to his own soul what it was that he really feared. Play-actor or no play-actor, Harold was a Dunville, and Lil must not break her heart. Had the young man come forward with formal proposals, he would have been snubbed and objurgated, no doubt, but he would not have been finally rejected. The unhappy part of the business was that the young man showed no sign of coming forward. And Lilian, meanwhile, was growing pale and thin, and refused her food. Rubbish about its being Lent! In no previous penitential season had the roses forsaken her cheeks, nor had she displayed so obstinate a preference for solitude.

The Lenten season was in truth one of penitence and humiliation for Miss Ormond, although the cause of its being so was other than that not unnaturally surmised by her fond parents. It is, or is said to be, a common enough experience amongst women to mistake the nature of their affections, and to love one man while fancying themselves in love with another; such errors are not unpardonable, even if to the male understanding they may appear somewhat unaccountable. But Lilian's case was a much worse one. Her case—slowly and unwillingly, yet courageously, admitted in the course of long rambles through fields and woods swept by the keen March winds and gay with nodding daffodils—was that not long ago she had been really and truly in love with Harold Dunville, whom she had learnt to despise, and that she now far more really and truly loved his elder brother, whose affection for her was simply that of a kind and friendly pastor for a grown-up child. Worse still, she had contrived to betray her feelings in such a way as to render them evident to Anne—evident also, no doubt, to others, including, it might be, Dick himself. She would have had to be either extraordinarily humble or abnormally proud to carry her head high so long as it contained the reflections prompted by the above deplorable facts. Fain would she have hidden her head; but, that feat being difficult of accomplishment, she disquieted her family by an

unwonted shyness, taciturnity, and withdrawal from their companionship.

She likewise, had she but known it, occasioned no small disquietude to the Rector of Dunville by her studied avoidance of him and his sister, and by the chilly greetings which she vouchsafed to him as often as greetings were necessary. He took it for granted that the rather ungrateful homily which he had addressed to her in London had given her mortal offence, taking it also for granted that she had not ceased to love Harold because she had, or affected to have, ceased to think well of him. He himself could not think very highly of Harold, whose behaviour seemed to show heartlessness or heedlessness, and the fact that he would have welcomed any indication on his brother's part of return to an interrupted allegiance gives the measure alike of the excellent man's self-abnegation and simplicity. For, indeed, he cared too deeply for Lilian to desire anything except her happiness, while he held far too modest an opinion of his own physical attractions to place the least faith in such nonsense as Anne had tried to make him believe. It may have been a little of a disappointment to him that Anne made no further assaults upon his credulity, either in the cause of nonsense or sense. Anne, to whom the situation was as clear as daylight, held her peace, and indulged in an occasional private chuckle, knowing that all was bound to end satisfactorily now. Sooner or later magnet and steel would meet, and an estrangement which was so visibly distressing to both parties would be terminated by the act of one or other of them. If, in the meantime, Lilian saw fit to decline invitations to tea, to neglect week-day services, and to visit the poor of the parish at hours when the Rector was necessarily employed elsewhere, the more fool she! 'I have done her the service of opening her eyes for her,' Anne reflected; 'she may open her own mouth, or let Dick open his, at her leisure.'

No change in the state of affairs had as yet come to pass when, on a certain Sunday morning, the curiosity of Mr. Dunville's congregation was stirred up by the apparition of Lady Gardiner's bonnet in the Manor pew. Lady Gardiner seldom or never visited her country residence at that time of year, nor, to tell the truth, was she at any time a regular churchgoer. On this occasion she brought one of her Schipperkes with her, and it barked shrilly during the sermon; a breach of decorum for which she duly apologised when the Rector, in compliance with a request conveyed

to him, came out to shake hands with her after she was seated in her carriage.

'I blush for William the Silent,' said she; 'so unlike him to belie his name in that public way! But I think he must have been under the impression that you were shaking your fist at me—which he would naturally resent, you know.'

'Teach me to moderate my gesticulation in future,' answered Dick, laughing. 'At any rate, William and I managed to keep you awake between us.'

'Oh, yes, you did, and that's more than most preachers can do, I assure you. I quite enjoyed your sermon. Now will you, like a good man and just to show that there's no ill-feeling, come back and lunch with me? No, Anne, I don't invite you, my dear; I want your brother alone this time. You can come and see me to-morrow, if you'll be so good; for I shall be here until Tuesday, attending to one or two odd jobs which have brought me down from London.'

The only job that had brought her ladyship down from London was perhaps a somewhat odd one to have been undertaken by a person of her indolent temperament; but she had a warm heart, which now and then moved her to steps of energy. Dick, who, after hesitating for a moment, decided to seat himself beside her upon the cushion which she slapped persuasively with her open palm, was enlightened as to the nature of her errand before half the distance which separated the church from the Manor had been covered.

'My appetite and my sleep are being interfered with by that brother of yours,' she began. 'Of course you may say—only I know you won't—that he isn't worth bothering about; but if he isn't, other people are. You will be having him down here some day soon, unless I am much mistaken.'

'He is down here now,' said Dick. 'He telegraphed yesterday morning to say that he could spare us a week-end, and in the middle of the night he arrived—so tired out that I felt justified in dispensing him from attendance at church this morning.'

'Oh, he did, did he? Well, I'm not surprised, and I'm glad I lost no time in countermarching him. I suppose he didn't happen to tell you that he honoured us with his company at dinner on Sunday last?'

'No; he hasn't mentioned it.'

'Nor, I presume, that on Tuesday he honoured my daughter

Josephine with an offer of marriage at which she didn't see her way to jump?

'You don't say so!'

'I say so upon the best authority. Now, as you are aware, I never attempt to interfere with Josephine, who can look after herself as well as I could look after her, if not better, the proof of which is that she bowed your brother out. Even if she had accepted him I should have been sorry for her, but I should have made no fuss, because I should have understood that she must be confident of making something out of him. She tells me that there isn't anything to be made out of him, and I should think she was right. At all events, there is no danger of his becoming my son-in-law now, and I confess that that is rather a relief to me, as well as to Joseph, who, for some reason or other, has never been particularly fond of Mr. Harold. But, on thinking things over, I guessed what Mr. Harold's next step was likely to be, and I tell you plainly that I don't wish him to succeed in it. I'm sure you'll agree with me that Lilian Ormond deserves a happier fate than she would have any prospect of obtaining as his wife.'

Dick sighed. 'Perhaps she does; although I take it that, generally speaking, getting what one desires makes for happiness. But why do you assume that Harold, who, according to your account, has just been rejected by Miss Gardiner, is in such desperate haste to—to commit himself in another quarter?'

'Bless me!' returned the old lady, with a wheezy laugh, 'you, as a parson, ought to have had plenty of opportunities for noticing that that isn't an uncommon effect of rejection upon your sex. However, the present case isn't altogether one of pique. Your brother, I believe, really did begin by losing his heart—what there was of it—to Lilian, and, although he didn't mind breaking with her when Josephine made a fool of him by hinting at a glittering future, he would probably be glad enough to return to the old love now that that bubble has burst.'

'I think,' observed Dick pensively, 'that you are perhaps a little too hard upon Harold. What you have told me surprises me a good deal, I confess; but I can't imagine—'

'Oh, my dear man, you could if you had any sense!' interrupted Lady Gardiner, with unwonted asperity. 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself for being as clever as you undoubtedly are and yet failing to see what is as plain as a pikestaff to the stupid old likes of me! And you will have still greater reason for

being ashamed of yourself if you allow the poor girl to be talked over.'

'What do you wish me to do?' asked Dick.

'Oh, not much,' answered Lady Gardiner, laughing and recovering her good humour. 'I hope to do something myself, although I can't altogether dispense with your help. That's why I asked you to lunch. Lilian has promised to walk over early in the afternoon, and I want you, while I am having a talk with her, to step round and prescribe for Lord Chancellor, who is suffering so dreadfully with his teeth, poor dear! It makes him rather troublesome to handle; but you know how to catch hold of him, don't you? And I believe there are forceps in the stables if they should be wanted; but I can't bear to think of that. Well, I was going to say that, when you have done with him, you might as well walk Lilian home. Do you see?'

'I see,' answered the Rector of the parish rather ruefully, 'that you have let me in for a troublous afternoon, and that the Sunday-school children will have to get on as best they can without me.'

'They'll get on without you all right—unless they get off, which will probably suit them still better. Now I hope you realise that, if through any mistaken notion of generosity to your brother, you allow Lilian to fall a victim to his plausibility, you will not only be a false friend but a downright enemy to her. He is sure to be plausible and, although she must know him by this time a good deal better than she did, there is still some danger of her being humbugged. I imagine that a few words from you will go farther with her than any warnings of mine; so you must speak those few words, unless you prefer to hold your tongue and risk ruining her life for her. Well, here we are, and I've said all I had to say. Dear me, what a hungry thing church, combined with this sharp wind, is! I feel as if I could eat the house up!'

While this very unexpected spoke was being put in his wheel, Harold, who had risen and breakfasted so late that, unlike Lady Gardiner, he had no appetite for luncheon, was sauntering leisurely across country in the direction of Beechwood Hall. He knew that on Sundays the Ormond family lunched at the archaic hour of one o'clock, he knew that it was Lilian's custom to walk over to the Sunday school immediately after the conclusion of that meal, and he thought that, with any luck, he ought, by dawdling a little, to contrive to intercept her on her way. If

not, he would march boldly on to the house, take the bull by the horns and make friends (sooner or later that must needs be done) with his future father-in-law. For Mr. Ormond was going to be his father-in-law; he had at last done with all doubt and vacillation. His rejection by Josephine had given him at the time, as he himself inwardly phrased it, 'rather a nasty knock'; but that was only because it is never pleasant to be rejected, and because the experience was so strange a one to him, not because he regretted either the lady or her fortune. On the contrary, he rejoiced to think that nothing and nobody (for of course poor Lorna did not count) now stood between him and the girl to whom his heart had remained faithful all along. It had been almost obligatory upon him—that was the way in which he put the case to himself—to make a bid for the recovery of the family property; but since he had failed, he was free, and gladly free, to consult the dictates of that faithful heart of his.

So he strolled on under the hard blue sky and between budding hedgerows, rather enjoying the keen wind and pausing every now and then in some sheltered spot to while away with a cigarette the time which must yet elapse before he could expect to descry the symbol of his happy future in the shape of a certain trim little figure. He was conscious of some quickening of the pulses, but not, it must be confessed, of much misgiving, when at length he did catch sight of that same little figure advancing briskly towards him across a stretch of gorse-covered common; and he took it as no bad sign that Lilian started violently and coloured up, as he stepped forward, hat in hand, to accost her. Her manner of greeting him, to be sure, was scarcely friendly; but then he had not anticipated that it would be.

'What has brought you down here?' she asked. 'You are the last person whom I should have expected to see at this time of year.'

'Why shouldn't I tell the simple truth?' he answered, smiling and taking her hand, which he retained in his grasp. 'It was the hope of seeing you that brought me down here in the middle of the night and has brought me out here to-day. It must be my lucky star, I suppose, that has brought you out to meet me.'

She withdrew her fingers, and there was no responsive smile upon her lips as she returned, 'I don't think your lucky star can have had much to do with it. I came out because Lady Gardiner, who also has arrived unexpectedly on a flying visit, sent me a

rather imperative summons. She has some interesting news to give me, she says.'

Harold's brow clouded over. In an instant he divined the motive of Lady Gardiner's abrupt, officious descent, and it was by a brilliant, as well as an audacious, inspiration that he exclaimed:

'Then my lucky star has had a good deal to do with my having waylaid you! For I believe I know what Lady Gardiner's interesting piece of news is, and I would rather that you heard it from me than from her. I meant, anyhow, to tell you that I made a formal offer of marriage to her daughter some days ago, that it was declined, and that I rejoice unspeakably in its having been declined.'

'That,' observed Lilian, without loss of composure, 'doesn't surprise me.'

'What doesn't surprise you? My proposal to Miss Gardiner, or her refusal, or my joy at being refused? Not one of these things is really surprising, although the first of them might very well seem so to you; because I am sure you can't need to be told that I have never for one moment been in love with Miss Gardiner. I wonder whether you understand! I wonder whether you remember that evening just after the election when I met you at the Rectory and spoke pretty plainly to you about Miss Gardiner and myself.'

'Quite well. It was on that occasion that you informed me you had written a play—which you hadn't written.'

'Did I? I had forgotten that the play was alluded to then, and I still think, as I told you in London, that you owe me an apology about the play, which was only ascribed to me by Dick's insistent request. But I owe you an apology—a thousand apologies—about Miss Gardiner, and I fully admit that my having actually ended by proposing to her isn't easy to explain. Only I felt that you ought to be told.'

He sighed and fell momentarily silent, while he paced on by her side; for Lilian had not allowed their encounter to interrupt her forward march, and he had perforce turned to walk with her.

'I really can't see why you should have felt that,' she remarked presently, since his explanation seemed to hang fire.

'Ah, don't pretend not to know what you can't possibly help knowing! Of course I owe explanations and apologies to the only human being whom I have ever loved in the whole course of my drifting, unedifying life! But how to give them!—how to make them intelligible! Lilian, I don't want to make myself out any

better than I am ; I confess that at one time the idea of re-establishing the family smiled at me—so much so that I almost felt as if it might be a duty to take a header into that gulf. Then came the fiasco of the election and Miss Gardiner's disdainful abandonment of the whole business, including me. I told you that evening at the Rectory, you know, how glad I was to be abandoned, and if I did not in so many words tell you why—because, frankly speaking, I was too impoverished at the time to have any right to tell you why—you must have guessed. But you will ask what in the world induced me to rush back into danger after I had had the good fortune to be set free.'

'No, indeed,' interrupted Lilian, 'I don't ask. I don't want to know. Please say no more about it.'

'Oh, I must say more ; I must answer, even if you don't care to ask. Her coming back from the Riviera in such haste was a sort of challenge, you see ; she had the air of throwing down the glove, and I couldn't resist picking it up. There!—I believe that is about as near the truth as I can get. I didn't want to marry her ; I have never wanted to marry anybody but you ; yet——'

'Yet the chance of winning the Manor was not to be discarded, I suppose. I don't know whether I ought to thank you or not for having been so candid ; but I will try, at any rate, not to be left behind in candour. It was quite unnecessary to tell me all this, Mr. Dunville ; for nothing that you could have said or left unsaid would have induced me to marry you.'

'Because you are angry with me. Well, I can't wonder at that or complain of it.'

'I really don't think I am angry. I may be a trifle disgusted ; but if I am, it makes no difference. The conclusive thing is that—I don't love you.'

Harold shook his head sorrowfully. 'Ah, yes ; that would indeed be conclusive, if'—— He broke off, but presently resumed, almost in a whisper, 'Can you say that you didn't love me last summer, Lilian ?'

She could not say that, and the humiliation of being unable to do so brought a rush of colour into her cheeks. However, she stood at bay and faced him bravely. 'I did not know much about you last summer,' she replied ; 'I know a good deal more now. Whatever you may assert, and whatever your brother may assert, I shall always think that your claiming to be the author of *Renunciation* was an act of which no gentleman and no honest man could have been guilty.'

'What would you have me do?' he inquired, with a slight shrug of the shoulders. 'Shall I write to all the newspapers and announce that Dick originated what I adapted? I'll do that if you like; but I doubt whether Dick will be pleased, and I am sure that nobody—a few critics, perhaps, but nobody else—will be interested.'

'No,' she returned, 'I don't want you to do that, or to do anything, except—if you will be so kind—to say good-bye here and cross that stile on your right, which will take you by a short cut to the Rectory. Your behaviour about the play was only an incident; I daresay, if it hadn't occurred, other incidents would have enlightened me; but it happened to suffice, and that was my reason for alluding to it. Are you convinced?'

He was not in the least convinced. Her agitation, the tremor in her voice, the unwonted brusquerie of her manner were so many signs to his experienced sense that there was no need for him to despair.

'Ah, you *are* angry!' he sighed, as he took the valedictory hand which she extended to him; 'no one knows better than I that you have a right to be. Well, I won't persecute you any more now; but let me say that I shall not change, and that I shall never give up hope until I hear of your being married or engaged to another man. I shall come back again, and yet again—'

'If you were to come back a thousand times,' she interrupted, 'you would always get the same answer. But I don't think you will come back; for, although I can't pretend to have much respect or admiration for you, I do at least recognise that you are not stupid.'

CHAPTER XXII.

DICK DOES HIS DUTY.

LILIAN resumed her walk with something of that inevitable satisfaction which attends the consciousness of having returned tit for tat. Harold Dunville had, some months back, lowered her considerably in her self-esteem, and now, she hoped, his own had been taken down a peg or two. Moreover, she was under no obligation to feel sorry for him; for although it might be, as

it seemed to be, true that his affection for her had survived transient infidelities, she could neither regard that affection as being of much intrinsic value nor believe that she had it in her power to hurt him seriously, save in his vanity. After what she had heard from him, she was not unprepared for the piece of news promised her by Lady Gardiner, and she rather looked forward to telling her well-meaning old friend how very little interest such information now had for her. Fond as she was of Lady Gardiner, and grateful for many kindnesses, she could not quite forget a certain afternoon when that excellent woman had put her to something like open shame by endeavouring to persuade her that grapes which were out of her reach were sour. The grapes had come within her reach; she no longer needed to be convinced of their acidity; still less was she disposed to welcome a hint that she might at last secure them, if so minded.

Consequently, Miss Lilian stepped across the park towards Dunville Manor, holding her chin a trifle higher, perhaps, than she would have done had she known who had been lunching there and who was even now emerging from the stable-yard which adjoined the house. Intervening shrubs concealed him from her, as they concealed her from him, until the pair met abruptly at such close quarters that they could not choose but shake hands—a thing they had not done for some weeks past. It was Dick's left hand that he held out, with an apology, his right being tied up in a blood-stained handkerchief.

'That vicious ape!' he exclaimed, laughing. 'Lady Gardiner sent me out to operate upon his teeth, and he managed to let me know how sound some of them were. I successfully extracted the unsound one, though—for which I don't suppose he will ever forgive me.'

'Hateful beast!' exclaimed Lilian, involuntarily abandoning the frigid politeness which had of late characterised her demeanour towards the Rector of the parish. 'Has he bitten you badly?'

'Oh, dear, no; only a nip. But my discourse to-night will be shorn of the graceful gestures which moved Lady Gardiner's dog to a noisy demonstration this morning. By the way, I didn't see you in church.'

'No; I—I wasn't there,' answered Lilian, guiltily conscious of having recently put forward one pretext after another for attending a neighbouring place of worship. 'Do you mean to

say that Lady Gardiner actually took one of the dogs with her? I wonder what she will do next!

'So do I,' observed Dick with a rather grim smile.

But he was afraid that he knew well enough what Lady Gardiner proposed to do next, and he was likewise a little afraid of the possible results of her ladyship's intended action. Doubtful also whether or not it behoved him to avert, so far as might in him lie, those results. For in truth it did seem to him a monstrous thing that his brother should have gone the length of proposing to Josephine, and he could not for the life of him understand why such an offer had been made. Should he, since chance had brought him thus prematurely face to face with Lilian, say anything to pave the way for a forthcoming announcement? He thought that there could at least be no harm in remarking:

'Harold came down to us last night.'

'Yes, I know,' she replied; 'I have just been talking to him.'

Dick pursed up his lips. 'Oh, have you?' he exclaimed, in visible dismay; 'I—I'm rather sorry for that.'

'Why are you sorry?' the girl inquired.

It was as difficult to answer that very natural question as to leave it unanswered. Dick reflected for a moment, and then told himself that, upon the whole, he had better speak out at once. Nothing, he was sure, would prevent Lady Gardiner from doing so, and perhaps, after all, nothing irremediable had yet taken place. Lilian, somehow, did not look as lovers fresh from an exchange of glad avowals are wont to look. So he said:

'I wonder whether you would mind coming round to the sunk garden with me for a few minutes before you go into the house. If we are about to have a discussion—which isn't unlikely—we might as well be sheltered from the wind while we argue, don't you think so?'

'I don't know what there can be for us to argue about,' answered Lilian, who, nevertheless, guessed, and who would gladly have made her escape.

'You'll know presently. Come along and let us get it over. I may tell you that I am only anticipating Lady Gardiner, and perhaps you would rather hear what you must hear from such a very old friend as I am than from her.'

In days past the Rector had exercised a certain sacerdotal influence over Lilian, and his present tone of voice was reminiscent—not unpleasantly so—of a period of her life during which

she had rendered willing obedience to his behests. It may have been on that account that she followed him, without further demur, to the sunk garden on the south front of the building, which was just then flooded with sunshine and brilliant with masses of hyacinths, tulips, and jonquils.

'Now,' he began resolutely, 'I expect I shall make you angry; but that can't be helped. I am old enough to remember your birth; so you will forgive me, I hope, for using one of the few privileges which go with advancing years and alluding to what I suppose must be called a delicate subject. I want you, in short, to admit, strictly between ourselves, that you and my brother Harold were very nearly becoming an engaged couple some months ago.'

He was looking away from her (for the sufficient reason that he could not quite trust himself to look at her) as he spoke, and therefore did not see the glance of hurt and humiliated reproach which she was unable to repress. But she did not choose to dispute his assertion.

'Well?' was all that she said.

'Well, then came trouble. I am not standing up for Harold, mind you; I think he behaved badly, and I won't attempt to explain his having behaved as he did. I must leave him to give explanations, if he can. But I wish in justice to him, and for your sake as well as his, to say that I honestly believe he has loved you in his heart through all that has come and gone. I have watched him, and I have noticed how his face changes whenever your name is mentioned. May I be very bold and add that I have watched you too—and have seen what I expected to see?'

No reply being vouchsafed, he proceeded: 'Of one thing I am certain; he has never loved Miss Gardiner. Will you take my word for that?'

Lilian had a momentary difficulty in controlling her voice, but she managed to answer, 'I daresay you are right.'

'I know I am! So this brings us to the question of whether he ought to be held unpardonable for being the oddly constructed, composite mortal that he is. One can't look for perfection here below, you know, we all have our weaknesses and defects and so forth, and his, I think, lie a good deal on the surface. Marriage must always be a give-and-take business; only what is essential, it seems to me, is that there should be love on both sides. Given that, all things are possible and most things are pardonable.'

'Including, I suppose, such a trifling whimsicality as his having offered himself to Josephine only a few days ago.'

'Oh, he has told you, then? Well, that was honest of him, anyhow.'

'I am not sure that he would have told me if he hadn't foreseen that I should be told by Lady Gardiner. But it really doesn't matter whether he would or not; for nothing that either he or you could say would ever bring about the marriage for which you seem to be so anxious.'

'I am not anxious for it!' Dick declared, still persistently gazing at the sky-line and the tossing tree-tops in the park which broke it; 'personally, I am anything but anxious for it; I don't mind confessing that much. Only I want to do my duty.'

'It seems rather odd,' observed Lilian loftily, 'that you should consider it your duty to say things which, as you must know, are particularly offensive to me.'

At length Dick withdrew his eyes from distant objects and turned them upon the speaker's somewhat flushed countenance. He perceived, on doing so, that he had justified his prediction and that she was very angry indeed; but he did not beg her pardon.

'It may be anybody's duty sometimes to be offensive,' said he, 'nobody knows that better than a parson. You mustn't, if I can help it, spoil your future and Harold's future for want of a little plain speaking.'

'Well,' she returned, 'now that you have done what you call your duty by speaking with such extreme plainness, I hope you will be satisfied and drop the subject. It was my duty to speak rather plainly to your brother just now, and I hope *he* will drop the subject. I suppose I have only myself to thank for your having both so misunderstood me; I suppose I must have behaved in an even more silly way last summer than I thought I had. But it is some comfort to know that you can't, either of you, misunderstand me any more.'

Dick could. 'Ah,' he sighed, 'it is just as I told Anne! If you didn't care for him you would be less indignant with him.'

'Did you tell Anne that?' asked Lilian, with a painful, humbling conjecture at what had probably been said to elicit the above false diagnosis. 'I wish Anne would mind her own—no, I won't say that, for I am sure she means to be kind; but——'

'But you wish, perhaps, that I would mind my own business?'

He was not contradicted, and, after a few seconds of silence, Lilian said: 'No doubt you also mean to be kind, though hardly

to me, I should imagine. I may tell you, and you may tell Anne, that I am not a bit indignant with your brother about anything, except about his having filched your play; and, after all, if you don't object to that, why should I? Very likely you think that it would be a good thing for him to marry and settle down, and that you ought to give him a helping hand. So, as you know that he honours me with a sort of conditional preference, you take up the cudgels for him, lest I should be prejudiced against him by Lady Gardiner.'

Dick shook his head. 'Nothing of the kind!' he declared. 'I am fond of Harold, and I would gladly do him a good turn, if I had it in my power; but I can't pretend that this officious interference on my part has been due so much to a wish for his happiness as for yours.'

'Thank you very much,' returned Lilian with ominous composure: 'I fully appreciate that.'

He went on, without heeding her, 'And what I said a minute or two ago is quite true; I don't personally wish that you and he should become man and wife.'

'Then why, I wonder, should you have considered it necessary to say the—the—I must call them the almost insulting things that you have been saying to me?'

He put his hands together, in deprecation of her wrath, and laughed unmirthfully. 'Shall I tell you why?' he asked. 'You will think me a most ridiculous old fool; but I don't know that that isn't a shade better than being set down as a false friend, which is what you at present appear to think me. I was commissioned by Lady Gardiner to speak to you; she thought it behoved me to save you, as she put it, from "falling a victim to Harold's plausibility." But, like Balaam, I had to bless when I was sent out to curse, because—oh, let me blurt the absurd fact out and have done with it!—because I love you myself, Lilian. There!—now you know. I have loved you, I believe, ever since you were a child, and I can't help it, and it isn't, when all's said, a thing to be ashamed of. I don't mind your laughing at me; only I can't bear you to be displeased with me. Whether you love Harold or not I can't tell; I'll say no more about that. But, as I couldn't be impartial in the matter, you see, it wasn't for me to put obstacles in his way, was it?'

Well, at all events, she did not laugh at him, which was so far satisfactory. But he really had not expected her to cry, and when

it became manifest to him that her silence was caused by sheer inability to articulate, he was a good deal alarmed.

'My dear Lilian,' he exclaimed, 'my dear girl, I haven't disgusted you, have I? Surely what I have confessed need not make any difference between us. I thought it might be as well to let you know the truth; but you may rely upon me never to make any allusion, direct or indirect, to it again, and——'

He was arrested by her raising her eyes, which were swimming in tears, to his, and by the tremulous smile upon her lips which on a sudden rendered language superfluous. Modest though he was, and convinced that the cause which he had not even pleaded was a lost one, it was impossible for him to misinterpret that unspoken avowal.

Presently Lady Gardiner, looking out of the window, upon the chance of descrying one or the other of two persons who had kept her waiting an unconscionably long time, beheld a spectacle which drew from her something between a chuckle and a snort.

'Upon my word!' she ejaculated. 'Right in front of the house, too, and in full view, for anything that they know or care, of half-a-dozen giggling servants! Why, it's hardly decent! Comforting to witness, though, and far and away the best thing that could have happened for them both. I wonder whether they will have the manners to return thanks to me. Also I wonder what he has done to that hand of his, which is sprawling across the middle of the girl's back. Can he have been knocking his rascally brother down? No; I am afraid that would be too good to be true. A small token of gratitude from poor dear Lord Chancellor, more likely. Well, it serves the man right for being so clumsy. Ah! there they go at last, with their arms round one another's waists, like a couple of shop-assistants. For sublime disregard of all received canons of propriety commend me to the clergy! May as well have a quiet nap now, I suppose; there doesn't seem to be much fear of my being disturbed for the next hour or more.'

(To be continued.)

The Story of a Struggle.

BY PAUL FOUNTAIN,

Author of 'The Great Deserts and Forests of North America,' &c.

CHAPTER I.

A DISASTER AND WHAT FOLLOWED IT.

HURRAH! After repeated failures I had succeeded in climbing to the top of the old outhouse at last. To my excited imagination it was not an outhouse, but a steep hill defended by a tribe, a thousand strong at least, of the fiercest Red Indians that ever hated the white man.

What were a thousand Redskins to my heroic nine-year old heart! I was disposed to think I had under-estimated the host. It was almost beneath my dignity, as the mightiest trapper and Indian fighter that had ever roamed the far West, to attack a paltry thousand. Like Alexander, I sighed for nations to conquer. The paltry party of Creeping Snakes before me, in the face of whose deadly arrow-fire I had just ascended the bluff slope of a big mountain, should be swept way before the murderous discharges of the surest rifle-shot in all the West. I had charged that rifle, which was my own peculiar weapon, to the muzzle, and was in the act of raising it to the shoulder to give the Creeping Snakes the first taste of my quality, when I was startled by the loud voice of William exclaiming, 'Who left this gate open?'

The Creeping Snakes instantly sank into the shades from which they had been conjured by my excited imagination; the wonderful rifle, which never failed to carry any distance and hit any mark, resolved into the thin air from which it had been made; the heavy pack of necessaries and reserve ammunition fell from my back, and I remained a trembling and affrighted urchin of nine. For it was I who had left the garden gate open, forgetful of the fact that

Pongo, our dog, never lost an opportunity of running in and tramping down some of father's choice flowers.

Moreover, I was on the roof of the forbidden outhouse. I had forgotten all about that in the excitement of closing with those rascals the Creeping Snakes. I began to whimper out that I was very sorry, and would never do it again. 'What! Are you up there? Come down, sir. Come down this instant,' shouted William, who was in one of his angriest moods.

I tried to obey, but found, like many another boy (and man), that it is sometimes easier to climb up into a scrape than to climb down out of one. I got down a distance of two or three feet and then stuck fast. I could neither get up nor down. William, seeing me in this fix, seized one foot and impatiently dragged me down. I fell to the ground with an awful sensation racking my body—a curious mixture of pain and numbness, distressing beyond description—and lay on my back helpless.

'Get up,' said William angrily.

I tried to rise, but could not do so.

'I can't move: you've hurt me,' I said.

'Nonsense. Get up, I say,' and he raised his stick, while I closed my eyes that I might not see the fall of the blow which I could not avoid.

But the blow fell not. Something in my appearance, I suppose, convinced him that I really was hurt. He picked me up and carried me indoors, and with the quick apprehension of childhood I perceived that he was frightened. 'Come, Jack,' he said, 'try and get on your feet.'

I did try; but the exertion caused such a sharp pain that I fainted. When I regained consciousness I found that William had stripped me, and was bathing my back with cold water. We were alone in the house, and it was a considerable time before my mother and aunt came home. Meanwhile I was left lying on the hearthrug; William, who was a near relative, trying every remedy he could think of, and every now and then encouraging me to endeavour to stand up. He was trembling much, and had suddenly become quite sober.

I was sorry for him, for I was exceedingly fond of him, and we were generally good friends. It never occurred to me that I was the victim of a hasty act; in fact, the shock I had received was so severe that I thought about nothing but the pain and curious feeling which pervaded my muscles, and wondered how it was that I had lost all feeling in my legs, and if this state of things

was going to continue long. For I expected that presently the pain would pass off, and I should be able to rise to my feet again. But this did not happen.

'Jack's had a fall,' explained William to my mother; and when I was asked how it happened I was too ill to answer. Years passed before the truth was revealed.

Presently a doctor was sent for, and this gentleman was much puzzled at my condition, saying that he thought I had had a fit. He did me no good, and another medical man was sent for, who at once declared that I had been hurt, and had better be taken to a specialist. This was, by-and-by, done; but some time had now elapsed since the injury was inflicted, and everybody's fright was over. 'I always had been an adventurous boy, and was continually getting into mischief,' &c., and, in a word, it was now generally accepted in the family that 'poor little Johnny would be a cripple all his life.' I was, however, taken to the Orthopedic Hospital. There the house surgeon gave it as his opinion that I 'might stand, but would *never walk*.' The sentence went home to my little heart with terrible force. I never forgot those dreadful words, or the matter-of-fact tone in which they were uttered.

I wonder what kind of thoughts would have chased through the skull of that orthopedic specialist if it had been revealed to him that the little urchin whom he had just relegated to hopeless cripple-dom was to walk on the soles of his feet, on one continent alone, a distance of at least 40,000 miles, was to travel on horseback another 60,000, and in a horse or mule wagon 80,000; to say nothing of perhaps 100,000 by railway and boat, and crossing the 'Herring-pond' twenty-six times! Am I not exaggerating? No; I think not.

I was appalled at the verdict of the hospital authority; but not for long. There came over my soul a fierce and angry feeling. I would not be a helpless cripple all my life. I would go out into the fields and woods and shoot deer and buffalo; ay, and men too, if they dared to act as enemies.

I was taken home, and from that moment neglected. I was not sent to school—I have not had a day's schooling in my life—not *one*. Nor was I taught a means of livelihood; yet I was constantly urging my father to give me a trade. Even at that early time I instinctively foresaw that I should have a struggle to live. I knew that a fierce fight for existence was imminent.

Meanwhile I was kept a prisoner to the house. I seldom went

out, except in the circumstances I am about to relate. My throne was the doorstep. There I sat, cross-legged, like a Turk, for hours at a time, and developed a surprising influence over other boys—always older boys than myself. I did not like small boys. The big boys of the neighbourhood were nearly all my friends. They pitied poor crippled Johnny—that is the fact, I suppose, though I thought nothing of it at the time. I was very dictatorial, yet, I suppose, I showed my will in the pleasant way common to all tyrants who are really masters of the art of tyranny; for I made but few enemies. My friends willingly gave me liberal toll of their tops, marbles, and birds'-nests; and my appearance on my throne, the doorstep, was the signal for the prompt assembly of particular friends, who came to reveal their plans for robbing nests, breeding white mice and guinea-pigs; and, above all, to read their penny cut-throats about pirates, highwaymen, and Red Indians.

The last-named stories were my great favourites. I had not much sympathy with Dick Turpin or Black Beard; but Trapper Bill and his marvellous exploits against Roaring Wolf and Creeping Serpent—Bill was the boy for me. I bought the penny instalments of his adventures, and got my companions to read them, and so stored my mind with my first inaccurate knowledge of the American continent and its Red Men.

Gradually the desire to read for myself came strongly upon me, and culminated in a passion for knowledge when a natural history full of coloured plates was given me by a friend. I must, and would, know all about those beautiful birds. Birds were always favourite objects with me. I wanted to read about them in my own time and way. So I went to my father again and said, 'Send me to school.' I was sent off with a flea in my ear. I am not going to say much more about my home. It was now a very miserable and much-neglected place, and I think the rest may be easily guessed. Matters had come to such a pass that, instead of being glad when my father hove in sight, his appearance was the signal for me to leave the doorstep, climb upstairs to the garret where I slept and kept my treasures, and religiously keep out of the way until he went out again. Yet I was not subjected to violence, or other cruelty than that worst of cruelty, utter neglect.

How, in these circumstances, was I to learn to read? At twelve years of age I did not know 'a' from 'an,' 'thee' from 'thou'—in a word, knew nothing whatever of letters, not even how to spell my own name. Where there's a will, there's a way,

and I sharply made a start. I took a book, selected a word that did not look too long, and went to my mother. I was told its meaning, and in a few minutes had it indelibly stamped on my memory. Then I selected another and another, and soon made myself tiresome; for mother had worries and cares and was not strong. But I had made a start. I always had the book with me, and never lost an opportunity, in season or out of season, to gain help from any chance visitor or person whom I met with. Then a big youth, who had been well trained, put me 'up to a wrinkle or two,' as he said—showed me how to find the words for myself in a dictionary, and taught me 'some dodges in figures,' otherwise the first three or four rules in arithmetic. In two or three months I was on the right tack, and was going ahead like steam. No schoolmaster ever taught a boy quicker than I taught myself, with such help as I have mentioned. I was soon able to read and write with facility, and then came a change in my tastes. I no longer cared for the trashy penny tales, but revelled in the glories of Fenimore Cooper, Marryat, and Scott, and the graver works of history. I was not so often on the doorstep now, but spent whole days in my garret poring over my treasures in good fiction, history, and natural history.

And I was also a great day-dreamer, if day-dreaming is the proper term for the working of my mind. That mind never ceased working except when I slept, and not always then. In imagination I explored great forests, took longer and more remarkable voyages than Columbus and Captain Cook, fought savages by the thousand, discovered new islands and continents, and endured hardships enough to have made an army of martyrs. Sometimes I was a trapper penetrating gloomy wildernesses thousands of miles from the nearest town, and killing bears and deer enough to stock a continent. Then I changed the scene, and became the mighty monarch of countless legions. If the world only knew what thrashings I gave Buonaparte, and how I made the little tyrant cringe at my knee, and how I won naval victories which reduced Nelson to a mere nincompoop by comparison! But I say no more. I mention these wild fancies to show the inclination of my mind and heart, and what they were leading me up to. I thought more of America than any country, and soon had made the fierce resolve (yes, actually a *fierce* resolve) that I would explore its huge forests and mighty lakes, or perish in the attempt to do so. I intended, failing other means, to cross the sea in an open boat. Learning that I was never likely to possess money enough to purchase a

boat, I changed my plan a little, and determined to nail planks together and make the voyage on a raft. I should certainly have made the attempt if the opportunity had occurred.

We must go back a little. I have said that I seldom had the privilege of going out. My boy companions noticed this, and often carried me to the fields on their backs. One boy (this was at Nottingham) said that he knew an old woman who had a large wicker perambulator which she would lend to us for sixpence a day, and he proposed that the other boys should club together to take Johnny to St. Ann's Well for a day's outing. This proposal was received with acclamation by all. God's blessing on their kindly hearts, be they living or dead at this hour! The old perambulator was soon procured, and half-a-dozen pairs of willing hands took turns to wheel it along. What a delightful day we had in the beautiful country lanes near Nottingham! I have never forgotten St. Ann's Well. It has always seemed like a sacred spot to me, and though I have never visited it since, I can see, in the mind's eye, its quaint dome quite perfectly.

This was the first of many similar enjoyable days. But I was independent enough to feel ashamed at taking my companions' pocket-money, and cast about for the means to help myself. This, at the suggestion of one boy, and with his kind help, I did by breeding guinea-pigs. My companions took them to Nottingham market and sold them for me; and by this trifling means I gained so much that I was seldom without a shilling or two to spend or lend to a companion. For there was no lack of *camaraderie* amongst us; and he who had, was always willing to lend to him who had not.

But there was no certainty in any of my pleasures or profits. My father seldom remained a year in one place—often only a few months or weeks. We were constantly moving from place to place; sometimes to towns, sometimes to villages. I much preferred the latter; but perhaps I learned more, and had more friends, in the former, though everywhere I always had friends who seemed to take a pleasure in my companionship and in helping me; in this respect I was most fortunate. At Birmingham I met a boy whose splendid development of chest attracted my attention.

'Where did you get that chest?' I asked.

'Oh, by drilling with dumb-bells and Indian clubs.'

'I must have a pair of dumb-bells,' said I, decisively.

'I can get you a pair for fivepence,' said the boy; and as I happened to be in funds, the dumb-bells were in my possession in the course of an hour. The Indian clubs I made myself, copying

the pattern from a boy's magazine; and with these appliances I practised early and late, acquiring a development of chest and a strength of arm that were of the utmost value to me in after-life, insomuch that in the whole course of my career in America I met but three men who could fairly claim to be stronger than I.

About three years after I was hurt I first noticed a partial return of strength in, first one, and then the other, leg, besides a total cessation of the weakness that had sometimes troubled me generally. I called my father's attention to these circumstances, but he said they were fancies. I have no doubt that if proper attention had been paid in time I should have entirely recovered. As it was I nearly did so. Soon after this I found that, with very slight support at the knee, I could stand up straight. I remembered what the old doctor at the Orthopedic Hospital had said, and I shuddered and felt depressed for a time, but not for long. I have never fretted much. I fancy I am what is termed 'of sanguine temperament.' At any rate, I soon came to the comforting opinion that the old sawbones might not be right after all.

At about fourteen years of age I could stand quite firmly, but the moment I attempted to step forward, down I came. Still, I was sure that all I needed was a support at the knee, and since I could not get what I wanted from the quarter where I had a right to look for it, I set to work to make the necessary apparatus myself. I did not succeed very well, and met with two or three accidents, but I kept pegging away at my contrivance, altering and trying to improve. As I had only wood and wire to work with, I could not make any support which had the necessary strength.

About this time we moved to Cheltenham, where my mother's relatives were residing. My aunt's husband was in business in that town, and from him I received much kindness, and he called my grandmother's attention to the efforts I was making to improve my condition. The result was that the necessary instruments were found for me, and I astounded my parents one day by marching home with the determined, saucy stride of a light dragoon. I was fairly on my pins again.

The speed with which I became used to my irons was marvellous. In a few weeks I could walk all day, and never knew what it was to get fatigued. It is true that I was a big strong lad, in spite of all the drawbacks I had suffered, and to the fact that I had naturally a perfect constitution is probably to be attributed the circumstance that I weathered this early disaster so well.

But the home conditions did not improve, and I became very impatient to be doing something for my own maintenance. I was still urging my father to put me to the learning of a trade in vain. He would not exert himself to help me, and I went away from home several times, and got into more than one serious scrape. I am afraid I distressed my friends sometimes; not that I ever did anything of a disgraceful character, but the fact is that I obtained possession of an old gun, and when that was in my hands I never had a clear notion of the legal ownership of such small fry as hares and partridges. The only excuse I can make is that it never occurred to me, warnings and lectures notwithstanding, that I was committing a serious breach of morality by 'fishing in other men's ditches,' as the old nursery rhyme has it.

One of my uncles was a parson. This was Jack, after whom I received my Christian name. Parson Jack was not a man to joke with, because, in addition to having a very severe disposition, he stood six feet five and a half in his stockings, and he and I sometimes had an interview which did not end to my liking. I put it all down to my having no regular employment of my time, and I one day said to myself, 'If you are going to America, you had better make a start.' I had never wavered an instant in my determination to go to that beautiful country, and was only awaiting the opportunity to put my resolve into execution; but I saw that the opportunity would never come if I did not make it. So the next morning, with literally no preparation, and with only about a shilling's worth of bronze money in my pocket, I ran away once more.

I had never gone far on these occasions, and I did not go far this time. Only to Gloucester, where I hoped to find some ship-master who would be willing to let me work my passage out to America. I could not find a ship bound to America, nor a captain who wanted a boy at any price. Some of them seemed to think that there was something wrong with me, for I was respectably dressed; and some noticed that I limped a little with the right leg, which has always been the weaker.

'I'm afraid you wouldn't be any use aloft,' said one of these men. 'It's often as much as a man with the full use of all his limbs can do to hold on; you would soon be blown out of the rigging.'

I assured him that I thought differently; that I was very strong, and willing to work for nothing.

'Very well,' said this man, who was a good-humoured fellow.

'Very well; fetch your father, and let us hear what he has to say about it.'

This nonplussed me, and I moved away amidst the laughter of the captain and some of the crew. None of the captains would engage me. Some refused kindly, and some were rough, and peremptorily ordered me to 'be off.' I did not apply at all the ships in the docks, because I had not arrived very early in the day, and, it being spring-time, darkness soon set in.

I had not money enough to get a bed, so I hid myself in the docks, and passed the night there, undiscovered and undisturbed. As soon as it was daylight I resumed my search for employment; but none of the ship-masters would employ me, some giving one reason for refusing, and some another; the fact being, I expect, that they saw that I was a runaway unaccustomed to a sea-life.

At length, a man who was in charge of a barge said that he thought that I should have a better chance of finding a ship at Bristol, and offered to let me sail round thither with him for half-a-crown. I told him that I had only threepence left, and I offered him that and such work as I could do, in exchange for my passage. I think he was about to assent to this proposal when I suddenly saw Parson Jack stalking towards me on his long legs. I tried to run away, but he sternly called to me to stop, and I was too much frightened to disobey. He came up and took me by the collar of the coat.

'You bad, wicked boy! Do you not consider how much you worry your poor mother? When we get home I'll flog you to within an inch of your life.'

Perhaps because I had been confined so much to the house in past time I was in some things innocent almost to the verge of softness, and this threat of Jack's to flog me 'to within an inch' of my life puzzled me a little, though I comprehended that I was going to get it hot and strong this time. I half expected that Jack would flog me so badly that possibly I might not recover from the effects of it. I knew that Jack was a tartar when his bristles were up. Had I not seen him take young Silas N——, my cousin, who was an *enfant terrible*, and throw him into the dust-hole for swearing at his mother; and had he not threatened a blasphemous coalheaver that he would roll him in the gutter if he did not use cleaner language? The Church militant as represented by Uncle Jack was not to be played with, I knew remarkably well. So I was in great trepidation, for I fully expected that Jack would keep his word.

'Have you had any dinner, sir?' he demanded.

I began to snivel and cuff my eyes, and mumbled out, 'No.'

'You needn't cry till you are hurt,' said Jack, taking me by the arm in the manner of a policeman, and marching me into an eating-house, where he sipped coffee and looked at the daily papers while I ate a hearty meal. By the time I had eaten it (no great time either) I had regained a good deal of my courage.

I had tramped down to Gloucester, but we went back to Cheltenham by the railway. We had to wait some time for a train, and Jack put me into the general waiting-room while he exercised his great legs by pacing up and down the platform, to the no small astonishment of the passengers, who had evidently rarely seen so tall a man.

There was another boy in the waiting-room—a big, broad, loosely made chap, with a pale face covered with small white pimples. He was dressed in a blue pea-jacket, wide trousers, and a cap with a shiny peak, and had a small bundle tied in a red cotton handkerchief—a sailor-boy, and therefore a friend at sight. Without any preliminaries, I took a chair and sat down close beside him.

'You've been to sea?' I began, inquiringly.

'Yes,' he replied. 'Jist come ashore arter being wrecked.'

'Lor! you don't mean it,' I said; and he instantly became a hero in my sight, and I almost worshipped him. To me, who had never experienced it, and did not know what it really meant, being wrecked was a delightful, a glorious adventure.

'How did it happen?' was my next inquiry; and I soon drank in with rapturous joy the first story of a wreck at sea which I had been privileged to hear from the lips of one who had actually been a hero of the adventure. 'And what have you got in that bundle?' I demanded.

'Them's slops. All I saved,' said the boy.

I did not know what he meant by slops, that word being confined in my vocabulary to the drainings of tea-cups, &c., but he kindly undid the bundle and displayed an old check shirt, a flannel, a black tie, and a piece of a horn comb.

'Them things, when they belongs to sailor-men, is slops,' he kindly explained.

I was next much exercised by the numerous pimples on his face, and bluntly asked how he came by them. He was not at all offended.

'Them's brought on by the salt victuals. Too much salt-junk and mity biscuit ain't good for you, you know.'

It was my turn now, and I told him all about my troubles and runnings away from home, and how I was determined to go to America—that is, if I survived the flogging to within an inch of my life, which I told him I was to get when I reached home.

But the boy was not much impressed with the threat of the flogging.

‘If I was you,’ he said, ‘I shouldn’t trouble about that. Lor’, you should see the floggings I’ve had!’

‘Have you?’ I said. ‘To within an inch of your life?’

‘Nigher nor that,’ said the boy. ‘Why, I’ve been rope’s-ended that bad that I couldn’t stand arter it.’

‘Oh, dear!’ I exclaimed, not knowing what else to say, I was so shocked at this revelation; for I had hitherto thought a sailor-boy’s life a continuous round of delights, remarkable experiences, and brave adventures.

‘Why, one skipper I sailed with rope’s-ended me at least once every day o’ the voyage, and sometimes six or seven times; and when I came home and landed I were one mass o’ bruises from stem to stern,’ said the boy.

‘Then that captain ought to have been hanged,’ said I angrily.

‘So he ought. That’s jist what the crew said. But they was all afeared on him, you see.’

‘My Uncle Jack is not as great a brute as that,’ I said, confidently.

‘In course he ain’t,’ said the boy. ‘Parsons never is. Nobody never heard of a parson being hanged.’

This extraordinary fact impressed itself on my mind with all the force of a truism heard for the first time.

‘Perhaps I sha’n’t get such a severe flogging, after all,’ said I.

‘Not you. Young gemmen like you never gets hurt much.’

Now I wanted to know where the boy was going, and what he was going to do.

‘Why, you see, I’m going home to South Shields in the first place. That’s where I belong, only we happened to be picked up by a timber-ship bound to Gloucester here.’

‘What! was there more than you there?’ I interrupted.

‘Yes; five men, besides the captain and mate. Only one man was drowned.’

‘Where are the five men?’ I inquired.

‘Outside the station having a booze. I don’t booze myself. I’m a teetotaler.’

My good opinion of the boy increased greatly, and I took out

my threepence and offered it to him, explaining that it was all that I had. He would not take it.

Further questioning elicited the facts that the boy's father was a sailor, that his home was at Shields, and that he had several brothers and sisters. The time passed very quickly in talking to him, and Uncle Jack came to the door and called me before I had questioned the boy as much as I wished to. Jack wanted to know what I had found so interesting in the boy, and I told him the story. Uncle went back and gave the boy something, and then he hurried me into the train, and I had only time to wave my hand to the young sailor before we started for Cheltenham.

The distance between Gloucester and Cheltenham is very short—six or nine miles, I forget which ; and Uncle Jack did not speak during the ride. I saw that he was thinking very deeply.

I was taken to the house of Mr. George H——, my aunt's husband, with whom Jack was staying, and marched up to the latter's bedroom, with strict injunctions not to dare to leave it on any account. An hour later, when I heard Jack coming upstairs, I thought I was going to ' catch it ' ; but no, Jack was not strong, in spite of his gigantic stature, and had only come to lie down ; and, to make a long story short, I was neither flogged nor scolded, and soon found an excuse for slipping down to the shop to Uncle George, with whom I was a great favourite. Then matters blew over for the time.

(To be continued.)

Eld to Youth.

WOULD I exchange
 With you, my sweet,
 For the clear eyes' range,
 And the rapid feet,
 And the heart's high beat ;

The white brow smooth,
 The cheek's warm rose,
 The lips of youth,
 And the lovely glows
 That morning knows ?

Exchange for these
 The furrowed brow,
 And the feeble knees,
 And the hair's thin snow,
 And the voice brought low ;

The eyes' eclipse,
 And the hand that shakes ;
 The shaming slips
 That memory makes ;
 And the sevenfold aches ?

Not I, not I,
 O young, O fair !
 Who am standing nigh
 To the river where
 The soul strips bare.

But I may not speak
 To tell you why,
 O smooth of cheek,
 O bright of eye,
 Till the day I die.

ELD TO YOUTH.

31

(Have you not heard
Of the fair white stone
With its written word
By one soul known
And God alone ?)

EMILY HICKEY.

The Woodpecker.

EH dear,' groaned John Barnes to himself, as he threaded his way through the greasy Liverpool streets, 'I wouldn't live in town, no, not for a thousand pound a year! A body can scarce breathe, and the smudge and the dirt and the smells and all—and the folks wi' their foul clothes and their faces all mucked over!'

Words failed him at this juncture, and he summed up the remainder of his strictures in a tremendous shake of the head.

'Well, come, here's the office at last. It beats me how Mr. Smart can choose for to live in such a place—to pass so much of his time there, anyway. 'Tis a wonder they lawyer folks can't do their business in the country; and Mr. Smart that rich, and never a chick nor child to leave his brass to. I'd have a nice little place, *I* know, wi' a two-three cows and that, and a few pigs and some fowls; but town, town, town, all day and all night—if Mr. Smart weren't a lawyer I could think him a bit of a fool!'

He was halfway up the second flight of stairs by this time—the broad, grimy stone stairs that led to the lawyer's office; stairs that had been polished by the feet of generations of clerks and clients. Others besides Mr. Smart had chambers in the great murky building; an auctioneer, an estate valuer, an insurance agent, were among a few of the busy men who tenanted these premises.

John Barnes shook his head again when he paused at length outside the door on which Mr. Smart's name was duly set forth.

Before ringing the bell he dusted his coat carefully, pulled up his collar, and removed his hat. He felt unaccountably nervous, though he had come to execute, and not to receive justice. He intended, in fact, to speak out his mind pretty plainly to Mr. Smart concerning a pigsty, long promised by the proprietor of the estate of which the lawyer was agent, but not yet erected. A promise was a promise, and a pigsty was a pigsty; but that there tumble-down cot at home was not fit to shelter any self-respecting porker. John reckoned Mr. Smart wouldn't have much to say for himself;

nevertheless, what with the streets and what with the stairs, he felt unaccountably confused. At last, however, he made up his mind to sound the bell, and after passing through the outer office, and being well stared at by the various clerks, he found himself in Mr. Smart's private room.

'The boss will be in soon,' remarked the pert youth who conducted him; 'he's just stepped out for lunch.'

'Right!' said John, depositing his hat on the nearest chair and falling into an easy attitude with his hands behind him.

'Sit down if you like,' said the office-boy condescendingly, as he surveyed the burly countryman.

'Nay, I'll stand, thank ye,' said John; and then he pursed up his lips as though prepared to whistle, and suffered his eyes to roam round the ceiling in a manner intended to convey the impression that he was entirely happy and at his ease.

The boy withdrew, and John immediately brought down his eyes to the walls, which were covered with plans and maps, to the writing-table with its neat piles of docketed papers, to the noble array of safes and tin boxes, and to the rest of the paraphernalia common to such a place.

'T-h-o-r-n- Thornleigh estate,' he spelt out, staring at one of the white-lettered cases nearest to him. 'I shouldn't wonder if there were summat about my pigsty in yon. Squire, he gave his word, and Mr. Smart, he wrote it down, and naught's been done.'

The memory of his injuries restored his self-possession; he drew his brows together and looked about him more fiercely, and all at once a curious little sound fell upon his ear.

Tap—tap—tap. . . . Tap—tap. . . . Tap—tap—tap—tap.

'Whatever can that be?' thought John.

There was a partly opened door to his right, immediately behind the high-backed chair presumably usually occupied by the lawyer, but fenced off by a screen so that no one could see whither it led. The sound seemed to proceed from this direction.

Tap—tap—tap—tap. . . . Tap—tap. . . . Tap—tap—tap.

It was a curious, sharp, clicking noise, accompanied every now and then by the single note of a little bell.

John was still lost in wonderment when the lawyer entered—a burly, grizzled little man, with a good-humoured face and a kindly eye.

'Ha, John Barnes! Morning, John. It's the pigsty, I suppose?'

'Yes, Mr. Smart, it is the pigsty. I can't wait no longer for it, and the sow she can't wait, poor beast; and Squire, he said——'

'Yes, I know, I know; we've been so busy, you see, John; but I haven't forgotten you; I meant to look you up on Monday, when I am coming out your way.'

'Well, I reckoned I'd look *you* up, Mr. Smart. I had to come to town about some seed potatoes, and I says to myself, says I, "I'll go and see if Mr. Smart's alive. He can scarce be alive," I says, "else he'd ha' given me a thought afore now." I'm glad to find you're still in this world, Mr. Smart.'

It was a somewhat ponderous joke, but John perpetrated it with a vast amount of ecstatic chuckling, and Mr. Smart laughed too.

'Well, it's all right. I needn't go up to your place myself on Monday, but I'll send the masons—will that do?'

'Ah, that'll do,' replied John, nodding; 'twill do very well, that will. I'll expect them, Mr. Smart.'

He was turning to leave the room when the tapping, which had ceased during the interview, began again with renewed vigour; he wheeled round, his honest, sunburnt face astir with curiosity.

'Mr. Smart, if I might make so bold as to ax, whatever is that tappin' sound yon? I've been listenin' to it twenty minutes and more. *Tap—tap—tap—tap*, and then *ding*, and then *tap—tap—tap—tap* again.'

'Why, that's a typewriter, John,' responded the lawyer. 'Have you never heard of a typewriter?'

'What make o' writer might that be?' inquired the countryman, looking much mystified.

'I'll show you if you like. May we come in for a moment, Jessie? Mr. Barnes has never seen a machine like yours.'

'Come in, sir, certainly,' said a voice—a very sweet woman's voice—and the tapping immediately ceased.

The young farmer, with a somewhat awestruck expression, followed Mr. Smart round the screen and through the doorway into a room so small that nearly all the available space was occupied by a table and a chair. Set forth upon this table was an odd-looking object, the like of which John had never before beheld; and seated in the chair was a little woman—or rather girl—with a pretty pale face, and eyes that were both bright and soft. What would have most forcibly struck the beholder, however, was her hair, which was very abundant, and of so warm a gold that it might positively be said to radiate sunshine; it rose up from the pale serene forehead like a ruddy nimbus.

She bowed smilingly to the old gentleman, but made no attempt to rise.

'Show Mr. Barnes how the machine works, Jessie,' said Mr. Smart.

The girl's fingers flew over the keys, and John now discovered how the tapping was produced.

'It's very easy,' said the girl. 'I like the work very much.'

She withdrew the slip of paper from the roller and handed it to John, whose amazement knew no bounds.

'My word! my word!' he cried ecstatically. 'I never see anything so clever! It's wrote the very words you've been saying—the very self-same words, and that quick! If I was to go and write 'em wi' a pen it 'ud take me best part of an hour. Ah! that it would. It's—it's more like witchcraft nor anything else. I can't for the life o' me see how it's done.'

'Oh, I'll soon show you,' said Jessie, laughing too. 'You see, every time you press a letter the corresponding one drops into its place. I'll write your name if you like—Barnes, isn't it?'

'John Barnes,' cried the proprietor of that title, eagerly; he bent down as the nimble fingers again flitted over the keys. 'Why, them letters is all mixed up every way; I can't think how you contrive to pick 'em out.'

Jessie tilted back the carriage and showed John his own name neatly emblazoned in the midst of a garland of flourishes.

Barnes was almost stupefied, and stood for several seconds clicking his tongue before he could find words wherein to convey his admiration. When he did at length recover speech, it was evident that he considered the performance entirely due to Jessie's own extraordinary cleverness, and in no way to the ingenious contrivance which she manipulated.

'Why, it's like print,' he remarked, after exhausting himself in eulogy of her speed and dexterity; 'just the very same as print. I always thought it took a man to make print—a good few men it takes to make newspaper print, I reckon. And this here little lass just goes tap—tap—tap wi' they little small fingers of hers, and out it pops as clear as any newspaper. *John Barnes!* And ornymented beautiful. I'd like to keep that there, miss, if you haven't no objections.'

With a gay little laugh Jessie removed the paper, and taking up a pair of scissors that lay beside her, folded and cut it into a neat square.

'There, that will do for a visiting-card,' she said as she handed

it to him ; ' next time you go to call on anybody, and they are not at home, you can leave that, Mr. Barnes.'

The lawyer was called away at this juncture, and went into the adjoining room, leaving John carefully stowing away his newly acquired treasure in his pocket-book.

' Nay, I'll not leave it nowheres,' said John, as he restored this receptacle to his pocket. ' I'll keep it—ah ! sure I will. I'll keep it, and maybe have it framed. I never see such a thing.'

He paused, gazing at her with a smile that was half sheepish, half humorous.

' I'm thinkin' of summat,' he remarked. ' I'm thinkin' you're like summat, but maybe you'd be vexed if I was to tell ye.'

The little creature flushed up and stiffened for a moment, but presently relaxed, the kindness of John's face disarming her.

' What is it ? ' she said.

' Why, you see,' said Barnes, growing very red, but still smiling broadly, ' there's the tappin', ye know—*tap, tap, tap*—and there's the bright eyes—meanin' no offence, miss—and there's the little head turnin' this way and that ; and there's the——' Here he paused, hesitated, and finally, with a shout of laughter, brought out the words—' there's the crest ! ' He pointed significantly to the girl's fluffy hair. ' When I heard ye and when I seed ye I couldn't for the life o' me help thinking it. You're like a woodpecker, miss.'

Jessie had grown very pink again, and looked at him, uncertain whether to be amused or offended.

' And what is a woodpecker ? ' said she.

' Eh dear, to think on't ! Haven't ye never heard tell of a woodpecker ? It's a bird—a little bird as runs up and down the trees peckin' at the bark. Don't ye know *the woodpecker tappin'* ? '

' Yes, to be sure,' returned she, confusedly. ' I forgot for a moment. But you see I know nothing about birds, except birds in cages. I have never been to the country.'

' Never been to the country ! ' ejaculated Barnes ; ' and ye don't know nothin' about birds ! Why, ye look just same as a bird yourself—and so quick and that ! I reckon you could fly like one.'

Jessie shook her head rather mournfully.

' No, indeed, Mr. Barnes, I could not fly—I cannot even walk.'

John's jaw dropped, and he became mute with consternation and compassion.

' I have never walked since I was quite a little child,' went on Jessie more cheerfully. ' But I can do a great deal with my hands, so that makes up for it. I am thankful to be able to help father a

little. He is getting so old now, and a bit muddled in the head, and the office work tries him. He used to be one of Mr. Smart's clerks. It was Mr. Smart's idea that I should learn the typewriting, and he says I am very useful to him. He is so kind, you can't think. Father brings me here in the morning, and helps me upstairs before anyone is about, and I sit here so quiet and snug all day, and no one bothers me. I think myself very lucky and very happy.'

'Well, Barnes, have you seen all that's to be seen in there?' called out Mr. Smart from the next room.

'I reckon I ought to be going,' said John, unwillingly. 'I'm awful pleased to ha' met ye, miss——' He paused, gazing at her with a queer, dubious expression; 'it does seem a strange thing as you haven't never been to the country. Eh, I do think a breath o' country air would do ye a deal o' good—a deal o' good it would. It seems a pity as ye don't know summat about birds. And flowers, now—have ye never seen the flowers growin'?'

Jessie laughed.

'I've seen them growing in pots,' she said, 'and in the park sometimes, when father was stronger and able to take me out in the bath-chair.'

'Town flowers!' ejaculated Barnes contemptuously. 'I don't think naught o' town flowers, all smudge and smuts and that——'

'Well, Barnes?' said Mr. Smart interrogatively, appearing at the open door. 'I can't have you taking up any more of Miss Foster's time; she mustn't work too late in the evening, or her father will be grumbling.'

Barnes, with an awkward sideways nod, followed the lawyer out of the room, pausing, however, in the adjoining one to gaze questioningly at the old man. After a minute, jerking his thumb over his shoulder, he remarked, still with an inquiring look: 'Well, I've seen summat to-day—I have that.'

'You've seen a very brave girl,' said Mr. Smart. 'That little creature, who has nothing to depend on but her clever head and her active fingers, is practically the breadwinner. Her poor old father is fit for nothing now; of course I make out little jobs for him occasionally, but I have to be very careful. They are both as proud as Lucifer. I wanted to pension him, but he wouldn't hear of it, and neither would she; so I—well, he imagines he is of use to me still, and the daughter fully earns her salary.'

'It don't seem right,' said John gruffly. 'That there bit of a thing didn't ought to be workin', an' she lame an' all!'

'I think she would die if she didn't work,' said the other; 'it

is the truest kindness to put employment in her way. She has no one in the world to depend upon but herself—her poor old father is now a burden to her; yet the way these two apparently helpless folk manage to help each other is beautiful. She has the brains and the nimble fingers, and he, muddled old creature though he is, has still got the use of his legs. You should see her going the rounds of their own little place of a morning, supported, almost carried by the old man, and making good use of her duster; then he sweeps, and she directs. But now, positively, my good John, you must take yourself off! You country folk think you can take up as much of a busy man's time as you like. Good day. I'll see about the pigsty.'

As John made his way down the dingy stone steps he thought of the two figures who painfully toiled up and down them every day, and when he reached the street and looked about him at the muddy pavement and tall, smoke-begrimed houses, he groaned to himself.

'Never heard a bird singin' nor seed a flower growin' wi'out 'twere in a pot!' he ejaculated, and went on his way abstractedly.

A few weeks later Mr. Smart was astonished by receiving another visit from Mr. John Barnes. The spring was advancing now, and he could afford to take a holiday.

'Pigsty's finished,' he remarked, after he had greeted the old man.

'All right. I hope you are satisfied. You've not come to ask for anything else, have you?'

'Nay,' said John. 'Nay, I don't want aught else. Is Miss—— is *she* all right? I can hear that there writin' machine tappin' away same as ever.'

'It's not idle for many hours in the day,' returned the old man. 'Yes, she's quite well, and as cheery as ever.'

John thrust his hand into the capacious pocket of his great-coat and produced, with some difficulty, a large brown-paper parcel, which had hitherto caused that receptacle to bulge out in a conspicuous manner.

'I've brought her a two-three flowers,' he remarked, growing very red, and speaking with more than customary gruffness. 'They was in my way yon, an' I reckoned she might as well have 'em.'

'Why, that was a kind thought,' exclaimed Mr. Smart, leaning back in his chair and gazing at the farmer with surprise and pleasure.

'Nay,' returned Barnes in a surly tone, 'nay, I don't hold wi'

havin' flowers about—I'm fain to get shut on 'em. Will you give them to her ?'

'You had better present them yourself. Go in, and don't stay too long.'

After a doubtful glance, John strode across the room, and unceremoniously thrust open the door of the adjoining one.

'I've brought a posy for ye,' he said; 'laylock and daffodils, and that, and primroses—and pollyanthies. I wish ye good day.'

And having deposited the contents of his parcel upon the table, looking, it must be owned, somewhat the worse for their sojourn in his pocket, he closed the door again, and had left the office before the girl had time to stammer her thanks.

Her busy machine was silent for a few moments, and when the lawyer, whose curiosity had been aroused, presently peeped in, he found Jessie sitting with her face buried rapturously in her bunch of country sweets. Such a little flushed face, and so bright with joy; the old man wished that John could have seen it.

'Wasn't it good of him?' she cried; 'wasn't it kind? I have never had so many flowers together in my life. But he might have let me thank him—he didn't give me time to thank him.'

'You'd better send him a little note,' said Mr. Smart, 'a nice little typewritten note. I will give you his address. He will think it the most wonderful honour, and admire your cleverness more than ever.'

And duly on the following day John received a very marvel of a little note, in which the proper names were set forth in capitals, and the paragraphs divided by lines composed of alternate colons and marks of exclamation, which produced a highly decorative effect.

In the following week business took Mr. Smart to the Thornleigh estate, and he called at Barnes's farm to inspect the new pigsty. As he was preparing to leave John suddenly stretched out a detaining hand.

'Bank Holiday next Monday,' he remarked, with seeming irrelevance.

'Yes, John—Easter Monday. It doesn't make much difference to you farmers, does it? You make your men work just the same as usual, I believe.'

John cleared his throat.

'I was thinkin' of taking a day off myself next Monday,' he observed. 'Yon little lass—her as does the tap-writin'—the woodpecker, you know——': Here he broke off to laugh uproariously,

and then suddenly became preternaturally solemn again as Mr. Smart stared. '*She gets a day off, doesn't she ?*'

'Yes, the office will be closed on Monday, of course.'

'Could she sit in a trap ?' inquired Barnes. 'Because I were thinkin',' he went on, without waiting for the answer, 'I might just as well as not call for her and the owd lad Monday mornin', and fetch 'em out to my place for the day. 'Twouldn't be so very much trouble, an' I doubt she'd like it.'

'I'm sure she would,' returned the lawyer, much astonished.

'She's never been in the country, ye see,' went on John, speaking quickly and gruffly. 'A breath o' country air would do her good. She'd like to see the flowers, an' the birds, an' that. But I wasn't sure if she could sit up all that way in the cart without hurtin' herself. I wouldn't wish for to hurt her,' said John, eyeing Mr. Smart distrustfully.

'It would not hurt her at all ; on the contrary, it would do her a great deal of good. The little thing is wonderfully strong in a way ; her lameness does not affect her general health.'

'Then I'll call for her,' said Barnes decisively. 'I'll call for her at nine o'clock on Monday morning, an' I'll bring her an' father back same night. Where does she live ?'

Mr. Smart gave the address, and went on his way marvelling. If Jessie were like other people he would have thought that John was courting her ; but being what she was—no, no. The good fellow was sorry for her, and that was all.

Little Jessie and her father, both arrayed in their very best, and both beaming with happiness, were waiting on the doorstep of the house which contained their humble lodging when John Barnes drove up on Easter Monday morning. He had a very big powerful horse, and 'the trap' was so high that the top of her pretty hat barely reached the splash-board. Her joyous little face clouded over for a moment as she took note of this fact.

'How shall I ever get in ?' she asked piteously.

Tears were starting to her eyes, her lip was quivering ; should she be obliged after all to renounce this pleasure, when so very little pleasure came her way ? But John speedily set her fears at rest.

'Woa, lad !' he said to the horse, and then to Jessie : 'Now then, little lass !'

He leaned down, stretching out his long arms, and in a moment Jessie was whisked off her feet and comfortably installed on the high seat.

'Come along, Mister,' said John, stretching out a hand again, and 'Father,' becoming wonderfully wide-awake all at once, stepped upon the wheel, and was hauled likewise into the vehicle.

'Right!' said John cheerily. 'Now then, little miss in the middle, an' you an' me at each side to keep her safe and warm. I have brought a footstool for her—seat's high; that's it, under them there little feet. Now hap her round wi' the rug. Feelin' pretty comfortable, Miss Jessie?'

'Oh, yes!' cried Jessie gleefully. Her face was quite pink, her eyes shining; two little dimples peeped in and out as she smiled and looked about her.

John gathered up the reins, and they set off, the big horse hammering over the cobble-stones, the big wheels jolting on and off the tram-lines, the trap swaying violently from side to side.

The drive from Liverpool to Thornleigh is not by any means a beautiful one—the first portion of it at least; but Jessie enjoyed everything, even passing through the Liverpool slums and the very unattractive suburbs of the great busy city; and when, at last, these were left behind, and they found themselves out in the flat open country, amid green fields and budding hedges, her ecstasy knew no bounds. There were woods—real woods—in the distance, and they drove for some little time along the banks of a canal; and later on their road took them through a country town where, between the rows of neat houses, they caught glimpses of sandhills and the sea.

The air was very fresh and pure, and had an invigorating sharpness in it; it brought fresh roses to Jessie's cheeks and loosened her pretty hair.

'She's like a pictur',' thought John as he glanced at her, and then he sighed.

Now they were out in the open country once more, and driving along a straight road between cornfields, with a great band of woods stretching away in front of them, and homely roofs and stacks peeping out here and there from their midst.

Before reaching the village proper, however, John turned down a sandy lane, and presently came in sight of a snug farmhouse of time-worn red brick, with a large yard in front and an orchard in the rear.

'Yon's the place,' said he, pointing with his whip, and in another moment pulled up in the midst of the yard aforesaid.

A rough, good-humoured-looking fellow came forward to unharness the horse, and John, taking Jessie in his arms with no more

ado than if she had been a baby, jumped with her to the ground. He carried her right into the house, through a bright kitchen, where a sunburnt old woman was busy amid pots and pans, to the parlour beyond, a cheerful room with roses, red and blue, on the wall-paper and dimity curtains. A wood fire burnt in the grate, for though April was almost over, it was still chilly enough; but the latticed windows stood open, and the sweet air came in, bringing with it the scent of lilac and budding wallflowers.

Jessie drew a deep breath as he deposited her on the chintz-covered sofa.

'Eh, this is nice!' she cried. 'You did well to say there was nothing like country air. Oh, look at the trees yonder; and I can see chickens, little tiny chickens in the grass, and white flowers and yellow flowers. My word, my word!'

'I'll take ye to see 'em all presently,' said John delightedly. 'I'll just nip out and fetch the owd lad, and then we'll have a bit o' dinner, an' then out we'll go.'

'Dinner, indeed!' ejaculated an irate voice from the doorway, and Jessie, looking round, saw the brown-faced old woman standing, hands on hips, surveying them discontentedly. 'Dinner! 'Tis but just gone eleven, an' you never got me no 'taters afore you went, John. A body 'ud want to have forty hands in this house, what wi' milkin' cows, and makin' butter, an' readyin' up the place, an' cookin' dinner for strange folks.'

'Couldn't I lend a hand?' said Jessie quickly. 'Father would get the potatoes if you'd show him where they are, Mr. Barnes—he's wonderfully active still, father is—and I could peel them. And isn't there anything else I could do? Can I help with the pudding?'

'Pudden!' ejaculated the old lady. 'Set ye up! We don't never ha' no puddens here. A j'int o' plain mate an' a few 'taters, an' maybe a bit o' cabbage or a two-three turnips. "'Tis all I engage for," says I to John there, when I settled to do for him arter his mother died; says I, "plain victuals, an' washin' an' milkin', an' keepin' place clean—I'll not engage to do no more than that," I says. An' I've been doin' for him nigh upon ten year now.'

'I could make a pudding if you liked,' said Jessie; 'I'm a famous cook.'

'Now then, Molly, you'll have to take a lesson,' cried John in high glee; 'if this here little lass is as good a hand at the cookin' as she is at the writin' we may expect a treat. Why, here's the old gentleman got himself down all right, I believe.'

'Father!' cried Jessie eagerly, as she took off her hat and jacket and patted the little stray tendrils of hair into place—'Father, we're going to be so busy! You're to help me into the kitchen first, and then you're going to dig some potatoes——'

'Nay, we'll not ax him to do that,' interrupted John. 'Take off your coat, and sit you down, and rest by the fire. We'll not trouble you to help the lass next door neither. I'll nip in with her myself in a minute.'

'Oh, please,' said Jessie, colouring up, 'I'd rather have father.'

John drew back, looking rather crestfallen, and in a moment, recovering her equanimity, she smiled up at him as though to disarm him.

'I'm used to father, you see,' she said.

By the time John came back with the potatoes the pudding-making was in full progress. That was a pudding! There was such weighing and sifting, and whipping and kneading, as John had never seen. He stood by, deeply impressed, while she buttered the mould.

'She thinks of everything,' he said to himself. 'I never seed anything so clever—it beats all!'

When, in course of time, the pudding came to table he ate his portion with an almost reverential air.

'Couldn't be better made if you was at the cooking always!' he remarked.

The repast being concluded, he proposed an inspection of the premises out of doors.

'Ye'll not be able to walk, of course, an' we haven't a bath-chair here,' he said. 'I had a notion of carryin' ye—'twas but a notion, of course,' he added hastily, mindful of his recent rebuff. 'Twouldn't do; 'twouldn't do at all. We must arrange some other way. I wonder now if a wheelbarrow wi' plenty of straw——'

'The very thing!' cried Jessie, laughing ecstatically. 'If it would not be troubling you too much,' she went on more gravely.

With an eager disclaimer Barnes hurried off to secure the vehicle in question, and Jessie donned her jacket and, with the aid of her father, took up her position in the porch. She refused to wear a hat; it was so nice to feel the air blowing all round her face and head, she said.

Very quaint she looked perched presently upon a golden heap of straw in John's great barrow, with her little feet sticking out from beneath her trim skirt, and that wonderful hair of hers all ablaze in the sun. John looked tenderly down at her as he trundled

her up and down the paths of the old-fashioned garden, pausing every now and then to let her sniff at a branch of lilac or pick a primrose or a polyanthus.

Round the farmyard they went next, Jessie being interested in everything, from the smallest, most engaging chicken to the largest pig; but she liked the orchard best of all. As the wheelbarrow went bumping over the long grass she gazed about her in rapture. Daffodils grew in patches here and there, and every plum and pear tree was a sheet of blossom; and there were even one or two apple trees showing little rosy cups on their gnarled twigs.

'I never saw anything so pretty in my life!' she cried, as he paused in the middle of the enclosure to let her gaze her fill.

They were alone, old Foster having lingered by the gate to light and smoke his pipe. Jessie's cheeks were as pink as the apple blossoms themselves; the breeze was lifting the curls on her forehead, and making them dance and wave; her little white teeth flashed out as she smiled.

'You'd see something bonnier if ye could see yoursel', said John, dropping the handles of the wheelbarrow and bending over her.

The smile vanished from Jessie's lips, and the colour faded from her face.

'Oh, Mr. Barnes,' she said in a low, shocked voice, 'you should not say such things as that to me!'

'Why not?' he retorted quickly, 'if they're true.'

'I did not expect it from you,' she protested vehemently; 'you know I am not like other girls.'

'You're a deal nicer than any girl I ever see,' responded John. 'I like ye a deal better——'

'Oh, hush!' cried she; 'I can't bear to hear you talk like that.'

'I won't if it vexes ye,' said he, in an altered voice, 'but I meant no offence.'

He tilted the wheelbarrow again and trundled her silently between the rows of trees, and out at the other side, and past the 'shippons,' where Molly was hard at work milking a batch of fine cows, and back to the door again; but not a word said he.

Jessie twisted round her head and looked up at him; his face was very grave. Then she looked down at the strong hands which held the barrow-handles, and she saw that one of his coat-sleeves was frayed at the edge.

'Mr. Barnes,' said she in a small, insinuating voice, 'I can't

help noticing that your coat wants mending. I wonder if you would let me sew it up. I've got a needle and cotton here.'

'Well, that's a notion,' said John, becoming good-humoured all at once; 'I never seed anyone like ye for noticing things.'

Down went the legs of the barrow again, and out came a neat little housewife from Jessie's pocket. Barnes thrust out his big brown hand, and Jessie's little white fingers went flitting round it with butterfly speed and lightness, turning in the frayed edge and stitching it down. The work was done in a few moments, and John inspected it gravely, saying to himself once more: 'There's nought as she can't do; I never seed her equal.'

'How 'ud it be if we was to have tea out here in the porch?' he said aloud. 'You'd like it, wouldn't ye? The owd lad wouldn't catch cold neither if we happed him well in 's coat. 'Tis nice and sheltered in yon corner.'

Again Jessie clapped her hands with the childlike glee which John found so delightful; and leaving her still enthroned in her wheelbarrow he went indoors to fetch her father's coat and to desire Molly to prepare the tea.

'In porch!' exclaimed that good woman with indignant surprise. 'Well, did you ever? I reckon thou'rt goin' crazy, John.'

'Very like,' returned he in an absent tone. He was looking at a certain chintz-covered elbow-chair in the chimney corner; it had been his mother's chair, and he could remember quite well the pleasant evening hours when she used to sit knitting and chatting to his father after the labour of the day.

Yonder had been his father's chair. John dropped into it now with a smile.

'Thou'rt moonstruck, I welly believe!' cried Molly with a thump upon the dresser. 'I've been watching thee all day, smirkin' to thyself and makin' sheep's eyes at yon poor little cripple.'

'Cripple!' cried her master, springing up with a fierce look.

'Well, but what else is she?' grumbled the old woman, a little shamefacedly, however. 'She has but the use o' one leg.'

'She couldn't be no cleverer,' returned John emphatically, 'if she had the use o' four legs—nay, she couldn't be no cleverer.'

'Eh, gaffer, you're never thinkin' o' courtin' her? A stranger fro' Liverpool, wi' an owd feyther as helpless as hersel', and not a penny-piece to her fortune I'll warrant! We'd have 'em both to keep an' do for.'

'Well,' said John sternly, 'tis time somebody did for her.

Now, owd lass, get tea ready—that's what thou'd best do. Howd thy din and get tea ready.'

He went out again. The old man was wandering up and down the garden path, and Jessie was singing to herself as she sat in her barrow. John halted by her side and stood looking down at her and fumbling in his pocket. Presently he extracted a slip of paper and handed it to her; it was that on which she had written his own name.

'Ye did that for me,' said he with a bashful grin, 'but ye didn't do it right. Eh, ye munnot be vexed—I mun out wi' it— This here paper wants summat, and I want summat—terrible bad. It wants,' he went on, pointing with his big forefinger to the blank space before his name, 'it wants summat wrote here, and I want same thing. It wants a—Missus.'

Jessie started and looked at him almost piteously.

'Nay, my dear, don't ye be scared. It's God's truth I'm tellin' ye. I want ye—I want ye for my wife.'

She gazed at him with a quivering lip.

'Oh, you are good,' she cried, 'you are too good. But I couldn't let you marry me—you only want to marry me because you are sorry for me.'

'Nought o' the kind,' said John stoutly. 'I could do wi' ye very well—I'm real fond of ye, my dear. I think I was fond of ye from the minute I clapped eyes on ye. I tell ye plain I never noticed no woman before, an' if ye won't have me I'll stay single all my days.'

'But—Father?' she faltered.

'Eh, I could do wi' the owd lad too,' cried he good-humouredly. 'He'd keep ye company by times when I'm busy, and he'd keep me company of an evenin' wi' a pipe.'

In the silence that followed he could hear the beating of her heart. A great wave of tenderness swept over him.

'Come, my lass,' he said, 'trust me! I love you true—I'll love ye always. Will ye take me?'

As he stretched out his arms her two small fluttering hands went out in answer, and with a cry the little woodpecker nestled in his breast.

M. E. FRANCIS.

That Unblessed Land Mesopotamia.

WE were encamped in the Khan, the native inn at Severek, a dismal town in the wilds of Mesopotamia. The weather and the depth of mud made it impossible for us to pitch our tents outside, and the dirty, windowless sheds round the courtyard, which afforded the only sleeping accommodation, were not inviting, so we had fixed our tent in a covered passage by tying the ropes to the pillars supporting the roof. The Zaptiehs deputed to guard us for the night hung about the door plying our Turkish friend Hassan and the Armenian cook Arten with questions as to our sanity. Why should two foreign ladies choose the depth of winter to travel between Ourfa and Diarbekr along the caravan route, which had been long deserted owing to the raids of the Hamidiyeh Kurds? I had often asked myself the same question during the last few days, but had not yet thought of an answer.

A pale, dishevelled young man in semi-European clothes slouched into the courtyard and joined the group. The Zaptiehs spoke roughly to him, and he gave a cringing reply; he forced his way past them up to me.

'Moi parle Français,' he said, with an accent corresponding to his grammar.

'So it seems,' I answered in the same language.

'To-morrow I travel with you,' he went on.

'Indeed!' I answered, with more of interrogation than of cordiality.

'Yes, you and my mother and sisters will go in an araba' (a native cart), 'and I and my brother will ride your horses.'

I made a closer inspection of the individual, but could detect no signs of insanity to harmonise with his utterances.

'Who are you?' I said.

'I am an Armenian,' he answered. 'I have a travelling theatre; we want to get to Diarbekr, and have been waiting here for weeks for an opportunity to join a caravan. The road is so unsafe that no one dares pass this way now, and if we do not go with you

we may be here for months yet. You will start at seven to-morrow morning, and we shall do thirteen hours to K——'

'We shall start when it suits us,' I replied, 'and stop when we have a mind. We never travel more than eight hours, and shall not do the regular stages to Diarbekr. We shall be three days on the way.'

'You must go in two days,' he persisted; 'we cannot afford to be so long on the road.'

I began to get angry.

'Go away, strange young man,' I said, 'and don't bother me any more.'

'I will have everything ready,' he said.

'You may make your own arrangements for yourself,' I rejoined; 'if you wish to follow us on the road it is a public way, but understand that we have nothing to do with you; we start when we like, stop when we wish, ride our own animals and call our souls our own.'

'My soul is Christian,' he said anxiously, as I moved off; 'are you not my sister?'

'Young man,' I said sternly, 'we may be brothers and sisters in spirit, and although we may be travelling along the same road to heaven, please understand that we travel to Diarbekr on our own horses and not in our sisters' arabas.'

Next morning we left the Khan at sunrise, and outside the town we found the whole of the Armenian theatre party ready to accompany us. A covered araba concealed the mother and daughters; we caught glimpses of tawdry garments and towzelled heads. Another araba was piled with stage scenery and cooking-pots; three or four men were riding mules, and there were an equal number on foot. The men were dressed in flimsy cotton coats showing bright green or red waistcoats underneath, and tight trousers in loud check patterns; they wore Italian bandit-looking hats, and their shirts seemed to end in a sort of frill round the neck, suggesting the paper which ornaments the end of a leg of mutton. The whole get-up seemed singularly inappropriate as they plunged ankle deep through the mud. Patches of snow lay in the hollows of the road, a furious gale was driving sleet at right-angles into our faces, it was bitterly cold.

We rode for hours through a dreary country of broken grey stones with no sign of vegetation or life of any kind. At last we arrived at a collection of tumble-down deserted huts, built of the stones lying round, and hardly distinguishable from the

rest of the country until we were actually amongst them. We were cold and wet, and had hardly come half-way to our destination, but as neither of us could stand long hours in the saddle without rest or food, we called a halt here to recruit. The Zaptiehs forming our escort begged us not to stop; they could not understand the strange ways of these mad foreigners, who not only travelled in such weather, but sat down to picnic in it instead of pushing on to the shelter of the Khan at the journey's end. But we were inexorable, and they reluctantly fastened the horses on the sheltered side of remaining walls, against which they stood with their backs tightly pressed, drawing their ragged coats closely round them. The village had been but lately ransacked and destroyed by Ibrahim Pasha, the redoubtable Kurdish chief; he was still abroad in the neighbourhood, and any detention on the road increased the chances of our falling in with him or some of his stray bands. The knowledge of this and the discomforts of the journey made the men fretful and anxious. We picked out the least dilapidated-looking house, and clambered over fallen stones and half-razed walls until we found a roofless room which boasted of three undestroyed angles. In one of these the cook tried to make a fire with the last remnants of charcoal; we huddled in another to avoid, if we could, the blast which rushed across the broken doorways and whistled through the chinks of the rough stone walls. The arabas, accompanied by their bedraggled followers, rumbled heavily past us; the noise gradually died away as they disappeared in the distance; desolation reigned on all sides; the howling blast moaned weird echoes of destruction round the ruined walls.

We managed to boil enough water to make tea; and then, yielding to the men's protests, we mounted and rode on. Hour after hour passed; the driving wind hurled the hailstones like a battery of small shot right into our faces; the rain collected in small pools in the folds of my macintosh, and I guided their descent outwards and downwards with the point of my riding-whip. The drop which fell intermittently from the overflowing brim of my hat had been the signal for a downward bob to empty the contents, but now the wet had soaked through and I let it run down my face unconcernedly. We were a silent and melancholy band. X. rode in front with her chin buried in her coat-collar. Her face was screwed up in her endeavour to face the elements; the hump in her shoulders betokened resigned misery. The soldiers' heads were too enveloped to allow any study of their expressions, but the

outward aspect of their bodies was a sufficient indication of their inward feelings: the very outline of their soaked and tattered garments bespoke discomfort and dejection.

The pale-faced little officer, straight from the military school at Constantinople, urged his horse alongside mine. 'Nazil,' he said. It was a laconic method, essentially Turkish, of saying 'How'—i.e., 'How are you?' 'How's everything?' 'Khassta' ('Ill'), I answered. 'Amān,' he groaned. 'Kach Saat daha?' I asked ('How many hours more?'). 'Yarem Saat, Inshallah. Bak, Khan bourada' ('Half an hour, Inshallah. Look, the Khan is there').

I raised my head to follow the direction of his pointed whip; the jerk sent a trickle of wet down the back of my neck and the rain blinded my eyes. I dropped my head again: it was not worth while battling the elements even to look upon our approaching haven of rest. I was too familiar with the aspect of the country to be particularly interested in the scenery; it had not altered at all for many days. If you looked in front you saw an endless tract of slightly undulating country, the surface of which was a mass of stones; there were stones to the right, there were stones to the left, there were stones behind; you rode over stones, slippery, broken, loose, sliding stones; and now stones, stones of hail were hurled at you from the heavens above. The very bread we had eaten for our midday meal seemed to have partaken of the nature of the country; I had accidentally dropped my share, and had to hunt for it, indistinguishable among the other particles on the ground. We were rapidly turning into stones ourselves; one seemed to be riding on a huge, dry river bed, the waters of which had been drawn up into the heavens and were now being let down again by degrees.

The officer gave an order to a Zaptieh; the man tightened the folds of his cloak round him, wound the ends of his kafiyeh into his collar, and digging his heels into the sides of his white mule, darted suddenly ahead. The crick in the back of my neck made it too painful for me to turn my head to look, but this must mean that we were near the Khan, and that he had gone on to announce our arrival. Visions of being otherwise seated than in a saddle faintly loomed in my brain; I hardly dared wander on to thoughts of a fire and something hot to drink. We turned at right-angles off the track and plunged into a bed of mud which led up to the door of a great square barrack-looking building with a low flat roof and a general air of desolation. The Zaptieh stood

grimly at the door. 'Dolu' ('Full'), he said. Nevertheless we forced our way through the narrow entrance and found ourselves in the usual square courtyard lined with dilapidated sheds. The whole enclosure, inches deep in mud and indescribable dirt, was crowded with camels and mules and haggard, desperate-looking, shivering men, with bare legs and feet and dripping ragged cloaks. The officer laid about him right and left with his riding-whip and ordered up the Khanji (the innkeeper). 'You must find room for us,' he said; 'I am travelling with great English Pashas.' The Khanji waved his hand over the seething, jostling mass of men and animals. 'Effendi,' he said, 'it is impossible; I have already had to turn away one caravan; if we made way for the Pashas there would still be no room for their men and horses. But they are welcome to what shelter there is.'

We gazed with dismay at the reeking scene.

'How far is it to the next stage?' asked X.

'Two hours,' was the answer.

'We had better get on to it, then,' she said, and turned her horse's head outwards. We followed in silent dejection. The wretched animals, who had been pricking their ears at the prospect of approaching food and rest, had literally to be thrashed out on the road again. We waded back through the mud and turned our faces once more to the biting blast and driving rain.

The track we followed was apparent only to the native eye; to the uninitiated we seemed to be going at random amongst the loose stones. One had not even the solace of being carried by an intelligent and surefooted beast who could be trusted to pick his own way. The hired Turkish horse has a mouth of stone and his brain resembles a rock. Left to himself, he deliberately chooses the most impossible path, until it becomes so impossible that he will stop and gaze in front of him in stupid despair, and you have to rouse yourself into action and take the reins in your own hands once more. His one display of originality is a desire not to follow his companions, but to veer sideways until you are in danger of losing sight of the rest of the party and become hopelessly lost off the track. I struggled to keep straight and in pace with the others; weariness and disgust had made my stupid animal obstinate and more stupid, and I finally gave in and lagged behind, letting him go at his own pace. The officer pulled up and waited for me.

'We must push on, Khanem' (lady), he said, 'or we shall not get in by sunset.'

'My horse is tired,' I answered, 'and I am tired,' and I showed

him my broken whip ; it was the third I had worn out over this obstinate brute's skin.

He called back one of the Zaptiehs and muttered to him unintelligibly in Turkish. The man crossed to the other side of the road and he and the officer, one on each side, urged my horse on with continual blows behind. I dropped the reins almost unconsciously, and, all necessity for action of mind or body being removed, sat between them numb, petrified, and hardly conscious of my surroundings.

Pitter, patter, came the rain on the saddles ; click, clack, went the horses' hoofs on the stones ; clank went the captain's sword ; whack came the men's whips behind ; each noise was hardly heard before it was rushed away in the driving wind.

Expectation of something better had made the present seem unbearable in the earlier part of the day ; now that one no longer held any hope of alleviation, the general misery had not the same poignant effect. Or was it that weariness from long hours in the saddle and the pains consequent on exposure to cold and wet had numbed one's senses ? Jog, jog, one was being jogged on somewhere, one did not care where and one did not care for how long.

The men were saying something ; the sound fell vaguely on my ears, but the meaning did not travel on to my brain. Then we stopped suddenly, and the jerk threw me forward on the horse's neck ; I felt two strong arms round me and was lifted bodily off the horse. 'Brigands at last,' I thought vaguely ; 'well, they are welcome to all my goods as long as they leave me to die comfortably in a heap.'

'Geldik' ('We have arrived'). It was Hassan's voice ; we were at the door of the caravanserai. He deposited me on the floor of a bare black hole on one side of the courtyard and carefully arranged his wet cloak round me. I was conscious of a motionless heap in the dark corner opposite.

'X. ?' I muttered interrogatively.

'Hm,' came from the corner.

'Hm,' I responded.

The muleteers came and flung the dripping baggage bales promiscuously about the floor. We were soon hemmed in by sopping saddles, bridles, saddlebags, wet cloaks, and muddy riding-boots.

Hassan sat on a pile of miscellaneous goods, smoking reflectively, and giving vent to great groans as he looked from one corner

to the other where each of his charges lay in a heap. The cook cleared a small space in the middle of the room and tried to make a fire with dried camel-dung, the only fuel to be had. The whole place was soon filled with suffocating smoke ; there was no window, no hole in the roof to let out the fumes. We opened the door until the fire had burnt up, and a sudden gust of wind tearing round the room and out again drove the smarting fumes into our eyes, causing the tears to roll down mercilessly.

Another caravan was arriving, and the animals passed through the narrow passage by our open door, on into the courtyard beyond. Mules bearing bales of cloth or sacks of corn ; camels laden with hard square boxes stamped with letters that suggested Manchester ; donkeys carrying their owners' yorghans—quilts which form the native's bed, damp and muddy in spite of the protection afforded by a piece of ragged carpet thrown over them, the whole secured by a piece of rope, which also fastened on a cooking-pot and a live hen. The procession wound slowly through to the sound of tinkling bells, until the whole caravan had entered the enclosed yard, which now presented a chaotic scene of indescribable crush and dirt. Kneeling camels, waiting patiently for the removal of their loads, looked round beseechingly at their own burdened backs ; mules munched the straw out of each other's bursting saddles ; slouching yellow dogs sniffed about the fallen bundles. The theatre ladies, in gaudy plushes and silks covered with tinsel-jewels, sat about on the piles of stage scenery flirting with the young men in the bright waistcoats ; stern Mahomedans wrapped in long severe cloaks gazed with contemptuous disgust at these unveiled specimens of the unworthier race, while the short-coated and less particular muleteers and menials stared at them with open-mouthed grinning wonder. Our little captain sat unconcernedly in a sheltered corner deftly rolling up with his delicate, finely shaped fingers, endless piles of neat cigarettes. A Zaptieh, with his face to the wall bowed and murmured over the evening prayer. Each pursued his reflections and employments with that disregard of his neighbour's presence which is so impressive in any crowd in the East. Apart from these by-scenes, the dominating human note was one of quarrel, in strange contrast with the silent waiting of the dumb animals, for whose shelter in the limited accommodation their respective owners were fighting with clenched fists and discordant, strident voices. Then the hush of meal-time falls on all : men and animals side by side are busy satisfying their bodily needs. It is a strange mingling

of men and beasts, where the man, in his surroundings and mode of life, savours of the beast, and the beast, with his outward aspect of patience and beseeching pathos, is tinged with human elements. We had shut the door on the scene, finding smoke preferable to cold and publicity. It suddenly burst open, and a camel's hind-quarters backed into the room, upsetting the pot of water on the fire; we had been anxiously waiting for its boiling-point with the open teapot ready to hand. The men threw themselves upon the animal and pushed; it backed; they pushed and hit and swore; it was ejected; the fire hissed itself out and the smoke cleared. A dishevelled looking official in uniform peeped through the door: 'The Governor's salaams, and do the Princesses require anything?'

Hassan courteously returned his salute; he was now seated cross-legged by the dying fire, sorting nuts from tobacco which had been tied up together in a damp pocket-handkerchief. With the air of a king on his throne he graciously waved his hand towards a slimy saddlebag. 'Buyourun, Effendi, Oturun' ('Welcome, sit down'). The man sat down, carefully drawing his ragged cloak round his patched knees.

'The ladies' salaams to his Excellency; they are very pleased for his inquiry, and send many thanks. They have all they require.'

The quiet dignity of Hassan's appearance and utterance seemed to dispel any sense of incongruity the visitor might have entertained as to the limitation of our wants and the methods of our royal progress; he merely thought we were mad.

He departed, no doubt to glean information from the more communicative members of our escort. The cook came in with a pleasing expression:

'What will you have for supper?' he said.

'What can we have?' we answered, with the caution arising from long experience of limited possibilities.

'What you wish,' he said, with as much assurance and affability as if he was presenting a huge bill of fare. I knew what one could expect in these places.

'Get a fowl,' I said.

'There is not one left here,' he answered.

'Eggs, then,' I suggested, with the humour of desperation.

'No fowl, how eggs?' he answered with pitying superiority.

'Well, we will have what there is,' I said faintly.

'There is nothing,' he answered cheerfully.

'Miserable man!' I said, 'how dared you begin by holding out hopes of lobster salad and maraschino croustades?'

Was there nothing left of our stores? I rummaged in the box which held them. Everything was wet and slimy. A few bars of chocolate were soaked in bovril, emanating from a broken bottle; a sticky tin held the remains of pekmez, a native jam made with grape juice; two dirty linen bags contained respectively a little tea and rice; a disgusting-looking pasty mess in what had once been a cardboard box aroused my curiosity. Could it be—yes, it had once been protein flour, 'eminently suitable for travellers and tourists, forming a delicious and sustaining meal when no other food is procurable.' It had been the parting gift of our respective mothers, along with injunctions to air our clothes. I calmly thought the matter out.

'X,' I said, 'will it be best to eat chocolate with the bovril thrown in, or to drink bovril with the chocolate thrown in?'

'Don't talk about it,' said X.; 'cook everything up together, and let us hope individual flavours will be merged beyond recognition.'

We put a tin of water on the fire and threw in the rice and protein. The chocolate and bovril were added after carefully picking out the bits of broken bottle. Hassan fumbled in the wide leathern belt which he wore round his middle; the space between himself and the belt served as a pocket where he carried all his goods. With an air of unspeakable pride he produced a small, round, grimy object, which he held aloft in triumph.

'Suwan!' ('Onion') we all shouted simultaneously in excited, ungovernable greed. He nodded ecstatically, and pulling the long, dagger-like knife out of his belt, he proceeded with great deliberation to cut the treasure into slices, and let them fall one by one into the bubbling pot. The cook sat stirring it altogether with a wooden spoon; he kept raising spoonfuls out of the pot, and as the thick liquid dribbled slowly back again he murmured complacently:

'Pirinje var, chocolad var, Inghiliz suppe var, Suwan var, su war' ('There is rice, there is chocolate, there is English soup, there is onion, there is water').

When the moment of complete mergence seemed to have arrived he lifted the pot off the fire and placed it between us. 'Chok eyi, chok' ('Very good—very'), he said encouragingly, and handed us each a spoon. X. swallowed a few mouthfuls.

'We must leave some for the men,' she said, with a look of

apology as she put the spoon down. She picked up a piece of leathery native bread and started chewing it.

'Try a cigarette,' I said sympathetically. I could not find it in my heart to tell her the history of that identical piece of bread, which I had been following with some interest for several days. It was always turning up, and I recognised it by a black, burnt mark resembling a letter S. It had first appeared on the scene early in the week; we had been enjoying a lavish spread of chicken-legs and dried figs, and with wasteful squander I had rejected it as being less palatable than other bits. The men had tried it after me, pinching it with their grimy fingers, but, being unsatisfied with the consistency, they had thrown it, along with other scraps, into a bag containing miscellaneous cooking-utensils. The next day it had appeared to swell the aspect of our diminishing supply, and had been left on the ground. But as we rode away Hassan's economical spirit overcame him; he dismounted again and slipped it into his pocket, where it lay in close proximity to various articles not calculated to increase the savouriness of its flavour. I was determined to see its end, and when X. laid down half—no doubt meaning it for my share—I threw it on the fire.

'It's hardly the time to waste good food,' said X.

The cook picked it out, blew the ashes off, and rubbed it with his greasy sleeve. He offered it to me.

'Eat it yourself,' I said magnanimously, 'I have had enough.' But he wrapped it carefully in one of the dirty linen bags and put it on one side.

'Yarin' ('To-morrow'), he said.

And so we sit—a mass of wet clothes, saddles, cooking-pots, remains of food, ends of cigarettes, men; unable to move without treading on one or other of them; tears rolling down our cheeks from the fumes of the fire, thankful we cannot see what dirt we are sitting in, or what dirt we have been eating.

We roll our rugs round us and lie on the sodden earth floor. Hassan turns the men out and stretches himself across the doorway. Dogs moan, men snore; outside the storm rages unceasingly.

In the middle of the night I wake with a start; something had hit me on the face and now lay in the angle of my neck. I knew what it was: a piece of plaster had fallen off the walls—and the plaster, like the fuel, is made of dried camel-dung.

LOUISA JEBB.

The Mating of Tryphena.

A PASTORAL.

I.

THE sea-fog, which through the day had drifted up from the adjacent coast, had increased in density until the low-lying lands were hidden in a vapoury curtain. On grass and bramble and hedge hung heavy beads of moisture, and from the tall elms there was an irregular patter like the first drops of a thunder-shower, whilst a few leaves that had survived the October gales surrendered to the weight of moisture and drifted down, silently, as befitted the dead, to the grave which the Earth Mother provides for all.

In the upland fields where there was the ghost of a wind it was clearer, though now and again, like huge drifts of smoke, would come masses of grey mist, blotting whole fields from vision, and striking the loiterer with a death-like chill. It was a day of cold and gloom and damp, infinitely depressing, and fit occasion for thoughts the most melancholy and pessimistic.

But there was some one in the zone of fog whose spirit held its own against the depressing influences of this November gloom; for now and again a cheery whistle, broken by a snatch of song, penetrated the fog, accompanied by a strange click, click, of steel against steel at momentary intervals monotonously regular.

Presently came a gust of wind, rolling the envelope of fog before it, and laying a wide field bare to vision. In a corner of this field a few sheep were penned together by a line of hurdles that formed the base of a triangle with the two hedges, and close by worked the man whose spirit rose superior to the depression which seemed to have conquered the world. Regardless of everything, he worked without haste and without indolence, and watching him, the click of steel which had sounded so insistently through the mist was explained. The field had borne a huge crop of roots, and he was busy dressing these in the orthodox fashion. His hands were shielded from the cold by a great pair of leather gauntlets, and for offensive arms he had a short bar of iron pointed at one end, and

a bill-hook. He transfixed each root with the iron, and held it whilst he dressed it with the bill; then with the back of the latter he gave the iron a vigorous tap, and the root rolled off, to swell the heap which had grown steadily through the day. He worked evenly on until the growing dusk added to the gloom of the fog. Then he stretched himself, looked at the patient sheep nibbling roots without the relish of hunger, and remarked, as much to them as to himself, 'Tes most time to be going whome.'

Notwithstanding his soiled attire, rough leggings, and clumsy boots and gauntlets, as he stretched himself out of the slouch incidental to his occupation, he showed himself a magnificent specimen of rustic manhood, taller than most men, broad in proportion, and with a face of that faultless symmetry frequently to be met with among Western children of the soil, and said to be a heritage from an earlier Celtic race. His stretch finished, he tossed a few undressed roots over the hurdles to the already surfeited sheep; then, picking up his tools, and the miniature barrel that had held the cider with which he had refreshed himself through the afternoon, he stalked off across the field with a long and somewhat heavy stride.

His course took him down the hill to the lane at the bottom, where the fog was thicker than in the uplands, and as he climbed the stile from the field to the lane there reached him the muffled sound of wheels. After pausing a moment and listening intently to assure himself from which direction the sound came, he began to stroll slowly down the lane. The sound of wheels drew nearer, whilst the man frequently turned his head, but could see nothing for the fog; then the moist veil was broken by a horse and trap, with a ruddy-faced country girl as driver.

When she reached the man, she brought the horse to a standstill, and in the tone of one who asks a needless question, to which the answer is a foregone conclusion, inquired:

'Will 'ee have a lift, Reuben?'

The man nodded, and, throwing his tools and cider-flask into the bottom of the trap, mounted by the side of the girl. Then they began to move slowly down the lane. For a moment or two there was silence, then the man asked: 'Ave 'ee had a good market to-day?'

'Tolerable. Butter's up dree-ha'pence a pound.'

Silence again, then another question. 'Any news?'

'Noa!' was the laconic reply.

The silence became intense, and the man glanced at his com-

panion's rosy face, then slipped off the gauntlet from his right hand. The girl had a fair waist, and not to use the opportunity seemed a piece of folly. A market-trap has many uses, and not the least of them is the chance it offers of a little quiet courting to a willing couple. So, quietly and unobtrusively, the arm slid round. The girl made no objection, but settled herself with a little sigh of content—the arm was so much more comfortable than the hard, unpadded back of the seat.

Seated in the trap, the man was head and shoulders above the girl, and presently he bent towards her as if to get a better view of her face. The girl kept her eyes glued on the horse's back until the man whispered :

'Only one, Tryphena.'

Tryphena looked round like a cautious maid. Only the parallel lines of the hedges were visible, surrounded by an impenetrable wall of fog. They had the world to themselves, so Tryphena's lips puckered to a red rose, and the man had his desire.

Even then he continued to look at her steadily, as if one had but whetted his appetite for more, then he stooped and whispered again.

The girl laughed teasingly. 'But that would be two,' she said, 'and you said only one.'

'Zecond thoughts be allus best,' he retorted.

Though she laughed at his clumsy wit, it was clear that in the main she agreed with him, for a moment later she lifted her face to his again. But the slip between the cup and lip is proverbial, and that kiss was destined never to be taken, for in the very act they were interrupted. A number of cows plunged down the slippery road from a field, almost colliding with the horse, and a hoarse and angry voice cried from the gate :

'Dall et all, there ! Look where yew be driving to !' A moment later the same voice shouted in astonishment, 'Well dash my buttons !'

'Tes father !' said Tryphena hurriedly, and Reuben slipped his arm to a less comfortable position.

The horse, at the first tug of the reins, had come to a standstill, and Tryphena's father surveyed the pair with angry eyes.

'Well, what be the meaning o' this ?' he asked, without specifying what 'this' included.

The girl nudged her lover to be silent, and, in a voice as matter-of-fact as she could make it, replied, 'Oh, I met Reuben up to the zix-acre vield, and was just giving en a lift.'

'Just givin' en a lift, was 'ee?' retorted her father, in tones elaborately sarcastic. 'An' 'e wasn't a-kissin' 'ee, was 'e, you shameless maid? I zeed en wi' my own eyen; an' yew looking zo well after the hooss that 'e came terr'ble near killing one o' the cows. 'Tes useless vor 'ee to contradict I. Get down an' drive the beasts whome; I'll bring the cart along when I've a-spoke my mind to Reuben Lanning.'

Whispering an appeal to Reuben, the girl obediently climbed down from the trap, and, following the cows, was soon lost in the mist; but the man kept his seat. Tryphena's father waited until she was out of sight, then he turned to Reuben.

'An' now, Mister Reuben Lanning, I'll trouble 'ee to get down from my cart.'

Reuben Lanning was not a fool, but he could not resist the temptation to exasperate the angry little man in the road.

'Why, Mr. Hunt, I thought I did hear 'ee zay as 'ee had something to zay to I.'

'Zo I have! zo I have!' shouted Mr. Hunt.

'Then, vor zure, 'twould be simpler if 'ee was to climb into the cart, an' zay et while we do drive down to the corner. 'Tes cold to stand argifyng to-day.'

Mr. Hunt went nearly purple with rage, and stood there spluttering for a moment, unable to articulate clearly. Then he shouted:

'Get down, yew impident rascal, an' never let me catch 'ee riding in my cart or philanderin' wi' my darter again, or zo zure as Chris'mas I'll have the law on 'ee. That a man should dare to ax me to get into my own trap!' he ejaculated, by way of after-thought.

Reuben Lanning still kept his seat in the trap, and surveyed the angry little man with a smiling eye.

'Then 'ee won't have me to keep company with Trypheny? he asked.

'Noa, I won't; an' if I do catch 'ee about the dairy, I'll set the dogs loose on 'ee—I will, zo zure as a gun.'

'An' 'ee won't drive me down to the corner, Mr. Hunt?'

'Noa, I won't; I telled 'ee zo already,' shouted the exasperated Mr. Hunt.

'Then vor zure I'll have to drive myself,' said Reuben coolly, adding, 'Twouldn't be safe vor me to get out o' the cart. You're such a violent little man, Mr. Hunt, that 'twould never do to risk et. Good afternoon!'

And picking up the reins he began to drive down the road, calling over his shoulder, 'I be mortal zorry 'ee won't ride, but I'll tie up the hoss to the gate-post.'

For a moment the dairyman watched the disappearing cart as if he could not believe his own eyes. Then he started to run, shouting, 'Woa, mare! Woa!'

But the mare was homeward bound, and Reuben shook the reins, so that Mr. Hunt's pursuit became a mere vanity, and he was soon left behind in the misty lane.

II.

For a month after the incidents recorded above, Tryphena's father and Reuben Lanning did not meet face to face, which in ordinary circumstances, considering how small a parish Larkchurch is, would be somewhat surprising. It must be confessed, however, that Mr. Hunt was partly responsible for this, as on one or two occasions, when such a meeting had seemed inevitable, he had directly turned aside, and once in desperation had lain concealed behind a hedge whilst the stalwart young labourer had stalked by.

Deep in his mind there was a conviction that he had been made 'a girt vool of by thic young rascal'; but since John Hunt 'couldn't a-bear to look foolish in the eyes of the parish,' he had swallowed his anger and maintained a judicious silence, even when in the bosom of his family. Reuben also, regretting the folly which had only exasperated a man whom he really desired to conciliate, had kept a quiet tongue, so that the full tale of that afternoon was known only to the two chief actors. Even Tryphena did not know; for though she and Reuben had met secretly on several occasions, she had gleaned nothing beyond the fact that her father had 'a-talked a bit wild.' But the inevitable meeting, long deferred, came in January, when all the best ploughmen of the parish gathered at Monckton Farm for the annual ploughing match. A fine piece of grassland with a slight hill in it had been chosen for the contest, and the morning of the New Year brought a dozen ploughs and men, each with the accompanying pair of horses, and among them came Reuben Lanning and, with the spectators, Tryphena's father.

It was a ploughman's day in more senses than one: a sky of leaden hue, with not a glint of sun from horizon to horizon, dry and with a touch of frost in the air that made the blood tingle;

a dull, cold day to many people, but to the horses and the men, upon whom the strain of labour fell, an ideal day. The plots were already marked and numbered, and at nine o'clock the contest began.

The soil, slightly clayey, was moist, but not sodden, and afforded ample scope for a display of the ploughman's art, which is much more a craft than many of those employments upon which dwellers in towns pride themselves. To see a good ploughman strike the coulter of a 'swing' plough into a favourable soil, judging the depth to a nicety, and then to watch him travel across the field, straight as an arrow, the soil curling from his share in a beautiful dark wave, is to understand what a measure of skill is required for this earliest act of husbandry. Groups of farmers and labourers stood at the extreme points where the furrows ended and commenced, commenting and offering advice; and this buzz of talk, with the cries of the men encouraging their horses, and the crisp rustle of the soil as it turned from the blade, were the only sounds that broke the rustic quiet.

Scarce a couple of furrows had been cut before the small group that had stood to watch Reuben across the field began to increase, so early was it evident who excelled in skill. The regularity of line in his furrow, the uniformity in its depth, and the shapeliness of the ridge (all points considered by the judges) won praise from all the spectators, whilst the cleanness of his start and finish put the result beyond question, if he could maintain the excellence of his work.

To the farming mind his work was a picture; but the man himself, with his sweating horses, the smoke of their breath in the frosty air like a nimbus about their heads, had an element of the picturesque very noticeable to eyes that found no pleasure in his furrows. Though he bent to the handles of the plough and something of his height was thus lost, as he stalked carefully down the field behind his great shining horses, ruddy-faced, and with a few beads of sweat on his brow, so earnest in his task that his eyes never lifted once from the furrow the share was carving in the sward, he seemed an embodiment of all that was dignified and great in labour, whilst by the way in which he brought his horses round at the end of the furrow, with words of encouragement and coaxing instead of the shouting and hard swearing used to the same end by some of his fellows, a wise spectator would have judged that he had that gentleness which often goes with great strength. Looking on him, you knew him for a man; and, set thus in his native

fields, at the task to which he was as truly born as the poet is to his rhymes, he seemed part of a general fitness of things that commended itself to the beholder's mind.

Some sense of this struggled with the bitterness and rancour that was in Dairyman Hunt's mind as he, moving from one competitor to another, stood to watch Reuben at work. At last his admiration drove him to ungrudging praise.

'Well done, Rube! Well done, bwoy! That be virst-rate!'

Reuben was at the end of a furrow wiping the moisture from his brow, and he smiled with pleasure at this praise from Tryphena's father. Also he accepted the olive-branch thus held out.

'Thank 'ee kindly, Mr. Hunt. I be pleased to hear *yew* zay zo, for I know you'm a better judge of a vurrow than most.'

Then after this adroit piece of flattery—for flattery it was—he turned quietly to his horses again and moved slowly across the field. He had seen Tryphena walking along with a friend, and did not wish for a meeting with her at that moment, with the dairyman standing by. When he reached the end of the furrow he noticed that she was standing by her father's side, and so purposely delayed the return journey. A small portion of the ridge of one of his furrows had broken with its own weight, destroying the symmetry of his work, and, following the practice permissible on such occasions, he stepped carefully over his work, and, stooping, patted the broken ridge into shape with his hands. The dairyman watched him for a moment, then moved along to inspect the work of the other competitors, Tryphena following. But as she went Reuben saw her head turn in his direction, and waved his hand. An answering wave sent him back to his horses with renewed determination to win the prize.

By three o'clock all the ploughmen had finished their tasks, and half an hour later the judges' decision was made known to the competitors, assembled in the parish schoolroom. The vicar was in the chair, and stated, after a somewhat rambling speech, that he had great pleasure in announcing that 'the first prize, consisting of two pounds in gold and a padded basket chair, was given to our young parishioner, Mister Reuben Lanning, whom he would invite to come forward and receive the gold and occupy the padded chair which they saw before them on the platform.'

That the award was a popular one was shown by the applause and hand-clapping which greeted it, and which was renewed when Reuben, attired now in Sunday raiment, the blood deepening under the tan of his face, and feeling mighty uncomfortable, went forward

and took *his* chair upon the platform. From that point of vantage he saw Tryphena nodding and smiling at the back of the room, and straightway began to feel more at his ease.

There were other prizes—viz., one pound sterling and a cuckoo clock, ten shillings and a pair of china dogs (spaniels), five shillings and a set of jugs, and, lastly, the inevitable leg of mutton. The fortunate winners of these having stumbled forward to receive their well-earned honours, there was another speech, this time from the Chairman of the Parish Council, a burly farmer, who rose as he said 'to move a vote of thanks to our worthy vicar,' but who, knowing more about stock-keeping than speech-making, ended by inadvertently proposing his health, and, puzzled somewhat by the laughter and applause this mistake provoked, immediately called upon Reuben Lanning, as representative of the winners, to second the motion. This he did with brevity that should prove a bright example to the more prolix members of the parish.

'Friends, I zecond the vote wi' great pleasure.'

After this had been applauded, and the meeting had expressed its gratitude to the chairman in the approved fashion, the audience dispersed, some to their homes, some to the village alehouse to grow almost excited over descriptions of how past fields were won.

Outside the schoolroom Reuben ran against Mr. John Hunt, and set down his chair in the road that he might take the hand which the older man magnanimously offered to him.

'I congratulate 'ee, Reuben Lanning. 'Ee deserves the chair, 'ee do, vor zure. Those was as terr'ble vine vurrows as ever I did zee, an' I've a-zeed many—I've a-zeed many.'

Reuben took the chance offered him.

'Thank 'ee kindly, Mr. Hunt; 'tes real good of 'ee to zay zo. An' if 'ee'll permit me I should like to zay how zorry I be vor that little joke I did play upon 'ee t'other day.'

'Don't 'ee mention it, Reuben; don't 'ee mention it. Bwoys will be—'

'An' if 'ee'd be zo good as to let me come up and zee Trypheny zometimes I should be terr'ble obliged.'

But on that point Mr. Hunt was adamant.

'That be a hoss of another colour. I couldn't hear ov et; I couldn't hear ov et nohow.'

'But,' Reuben urged, 'I be a-coming on. I be a man ov substance, an' be thinking ov taking a li'l—'

The elder man interrupted him with laughter that went to the younger's heart and once more set him against him.

'Ha! ha! A man ov substance! Two pounds an' a basket chair, I d' suppose. Oh, yes, you be a-coming on, vor zure you be. But I couldn't hear ov et, nohow. I don't mind 'ee having a ride in the li'l cart, but 'ee can't have Trypheny, not at all, not at all.' And, shaking his head, the dairyman passed down the unlighted street.

Reuben stood and watched until he passed the lighted window of the post-office, which was also that of the village baker's. Then he muttered to himself, 'The wold quaddle!' and a moment later lifted the chair and went to his home.

Two hours after, he was talking to Tryphena at the end of the lane that goes down to Manor Court dairy.

'Teddent no use, Trypheny. 'E was zo zoft as butter till I mentioned 'ee, then 'e was as hard as stones. I tried to tell en how I've a-spoke vor Lankbridge Dairy, an' how 'tes promised me, but 'ee wouldn't hear me; zo us'll just ha' to goa an' be married wi'out zo much as a by-your-leave to en. I've to move into the dairy on Lady Day, an' as the day before be market day, an' yew, my dear, 'll be to Axminster, us'll be married there by special licence up to the Independent Chapel.'

Tryphena, knowing her father well, consented to this bold and vigorous course on one condition.

'But 'ee must speak to en again virst, Reuben, an' try an' get en in the mind; an' then if 'e won't, I'll marry 'ee where and when 'ee do like, vor I d' think a maid have a right to a mind of her own on zuch things.'

Reuben agreed to make one more trial. Then, as Tryphena said she must be popping along, he kissed her, and she popped along.

III.

It must be put to Reuben's credit that he did indeed make another real and whole-hearted attempt to win Tryphena's father to his side.

Meeting him some three weeks later in the little cart, two miles out of Larkchurch, Reuben, who had been on business connected with the dairy of which he was shortly to be the tenant, gave him, the time of the day, and very humbly asked for a ride 'zo far as the post-office.'

'Get up an' welcome, my bwoy,' said Mr. Hunt, who was in a

genial mood, being indeed a little under the influence of cider fortified with 'the leastest drop ov gin.'

Reuben climbed into the cart and listened patiently to a wholly fictitious account of how the narrator had won three first prizes at ploughing matches in the days of his youth; then, when about a mile and a half from Larkchurch, he cautiously broached the subject nearest his heart.

'How's Tabitha?' (Tabitha was Tryphena's elder sister.)

'Pretty middling, thank 'ee.'

'An' Trypheny?'

'The zame; indeed, I mit zay her be terr'ble well, thank 'ee. Now, the victuals that maid do put away, to be zure!' He dropped into meditation, from which Reuben's next words effectually aroused him.

'I've a-been thinking lately ov coming up to zee 'ee about Trypheny again, Mr. Hunt. Us want to be married, an' I've a-took——'

'Not another word, Reuben Lanning,' bellowed his companion. 'I've a-spoke my mind on that b'fore, an' I haven't a-changed it—I haven't a-changed it.'

'But, Mr. Hunt——' Reuben protested.

'I won't hear 'ee,' shouted Mr. Hunt. 'Do 'ee take me vor a weather-cock, to be blowed about by any wind ov argiment?'

'Noa, I don't take 'ee vor a weather-cock, Mr. Hunt; but——'

'Zo 'ee won't stop et, won't 'ee?' interrupted the dairyman. 'Won't stop et when I tell 'ee? Woa, mare!'

He tugged at the reins, and the mare obediently came to a stand-still. With tipsy gravity he pointed to the road with the whip.

'Get out!' he said. 'An' never git into my li'l cart no more! I won't have 'ee argifyng me.'

Angry blood flamed in Reuben's face for a moment, then he gave a short laugh, and jumped down into the road. Mr. Hunt whipped up his mare and drove away, leaving him standing there. He looked after the receding vehicle, then he said to himself, 'That d' zettle et. Trypheny can't zay I haven't a-spoke to him vair.'

So it fell out on the day before Lady Day, John Hunt, dairyman, of Manor Court Dairy, strolling up the lane in search of a couple of young porkers that had strayed, was astonished out of measure to meet his 'li'l cart' returning from market with only one of the village youths in charge.

'Bob-a-dies, young man! What be 'ee a-doing wi' my li'l cart?'

'I've a-drove et whome vor Trypheny, Mr. Hunt; an' please 'ee've to give I zixpence vor doing ov it.'

'Give 'ee zixpence?' shouted Mr. Hunt. 'Dash my buttons ef I do. Speak man! What be the meaning ov this? an' where's Trypheny to?'

'Why, haven't 'ee heared, Mr. Hunt? There've a-been gay doings up to Axminster to-day, an' I expects Trypheny is where her ought to be—by the zide of her own lawful wedded husband.'

'By the zide ov her own lawful wedded husband!' repeated the dairyman in astonishment. 'Be the man mazed? Speak up, ye dunderhead, an' zay what 'ee do mean, sharp. Speak up, I tell 'ee, an' don't zit there a-jawin' like a vool.'

Thus admonished, the youth spoke up.

'Well, et do zeem as you don't know, dairyman, as how your Trypheny was a-married to Reuben Lanning at the Independent Chapel to Axminster no later nor this very noon. Girt doings there was too. All the market volk was there, and Mr. Vosper down to the zeed shop was vair zold out o' chicken rice, by reason o' the run on et vor the wedding, it being cheap, ee' zee, an' more decent to be a-drowed at a new-wedded couple than that which be vood vor good Christian volk. And there was a—'

'What be 'ee a-tellin' me, man?—that our Trypheny's married?'

'That be et, Mr. Hunt. 'Ee've a-hit the nail exactly, as the pa'son would zay. I be just a-trying to tell 'ee that.'

'But, man alive, she can't be. There haven't a-been no banns.'

'Noa. They was specially licensed. Do cost a terr'ble mort o' money, by all accounts; but they was, any way, and they be man an' wife now; an' Trypheny—Mrs. Lanning, as I mit fitly zay now—after all the rice-drawing an' health-drinking by the market volk, did come to I an' zay, "Now, Jan White, you drive whome the li'l cart, an' teake this purse to father wi' the market money in et, an' zay, wi' Mrs. Lanning's compliments, an' ef 'e do like to walk over an' nibble a bit ov weddin' cake an' drink a glass ov sherry we'll be glad to zee en.'

He paused whilst he felt in his pocket for the purse; then, handing it to Mr. Hunt, he continued: 'There's the purse; I've a-given et to 'ee now, an' Trypheny—Mrs. Lanning, I should zay—particularly zaid as I was to tell 'ee to give I zixpence vor drivin' the mare whome.'

The dairyman disregarded the hint. 'Where be they a-living to?' he asked,

But the man was obdurate. 'Give I the zixpence virst, an' then I'll tell 'ee, Mr. Hunt.'

Mr. Hunt almost flung the sixpence at him. 'Hurry, you dunderhead, an' answer! Where be they a-going to live to?'

'Why, up to Lankbridge Dairy, to be zure! Hadn't 'ee a-heard? Reuben have a-bin coming on lately, an' having zaved a tidy zum, Mister Bishop was pleased to let en have the cows.¹ They be about whome now, having gone round the lower road.'

A sound of distant cheering came across the quiet fields.

'Yees, there they be, vor zure. That be the village a-shouting them welcome, Mr. Vowler, to the post-office, having a-sent his bwoy on one o' them durned bicycles to give them the news an' bid the volks be ready.'

Mr. Hunt, realising the facts at last, was climbing into the little cart. 'Get out, you blockhead!' he said to the messenger. The man obeyed on the instant, almost tumbling over the side of the cart in his haste; then Mr. Hunt, between astonishment and anger, drove the little mare as he had never driven her before.

Lankbridge farm and dairy lie just outside the village, and as he drove up to the gate and along the rough cart road he became aware of what, for Larkchurch, was a considerable concourse of people, and saw Reuben Lanning standing on a milking-stool outside the dairy-house, Tryphena by his side. Reuben was making a speech; but when the people became aware of the cart some one shouted:

'Dree cheers vor Mr. Hunt!'

Reuben broke off the speech to lead them, and they were given heartily. This reception disarmed the dairyman. He could not run contrary to the popular feeling; and, after all, Reuben was of his own class, now no longer ranking as a labourer. So when Reuben shouted across the crowd, 'Get down, Mr. Hunt—father, I should zay—an' drink Mrs. Lanning's health!' he shouted in return, 'Zo I will! Zo I will!'

Some one handed him a 'God-forgive-me' full of cider, but Tryphena interposed.

'Not in zider, father. Tie up the hoss to the gate-post an' step into the house, an' 'ee shall drink our health in sherry.'

Mr. Hunt tied up the horse and stepped inside. He took the glass of sherry and drained it at a gulp. A second glass and a third, and he grew affable.

¹ In Wessex the farmer frequently 'lets off' the dairy to a dairyman, who pays rent for the cows as the farmer does for his land.

'Yew be too sharp for me, Reuben, too sharp. But, man, why didn't 'ee tell me about the dairy? Dash my buttons, I'd a-never have refused 'ee the maid if I'd a-known.'

'But I did tell 'ee, Mr. Hunt—leastways, I tried, but 'ee wouldn't hear——'

'There 'ee goa, argifyng again. But there, 'ee be welcome to the maid, 'ee be welcome.'

'Thank 'ee, Mr. Hunt. Thank 'ee, kindly.'

A pause followed, during which Tryphena pushed the cake towards him.

'Noa more cake, Trypheny, but I'll trouble 'ee vor the leastest drop o' sherry. Zo! that's enough! (The glass was brimming.) Mr. and Mrs. Lanning, my respects. I wish yew health and good fortin.'

And, setting down the glass empty, he went out to the little cart with a smile upon his face.

BEN BOLT.

Curiosities of Courts.

LIKE the waters of a whirlpool verging on its vortex the present age so accelerates its pace that a decade develops more changes than a century of mediæval years. Thus it is that many things familiar to our parents and even to our own youthful days slip so silently away that the coming generation will hardly know them even by name. Yet many of these things, albeit trivial, now passed or passing, are worthy to be had in remembrance, even if their contemplation lead us to suspect that, in essentials, our advance is more apparent than real, so that we might even agree—with some reservation—with a certain wise man of old who, recumbent and despondent beneath his gourd-tree, opined that ‘we are no better than our fathers.’ It is, at least, salutary now and then, before they are for ever passed away, to call some of these fleeting things to the remembrance of a generation itself as fleeting, lest it say in its haste, ‘No doubt *we* are the people, and wisdom shall perish with us.’

Most of us have often passed that fine pile of buildings in the Strand called the Law Courts; many of us have seen now and then affixed to church-doors notices that a ‘Court-Baron’ for such-and-such a manor would be held at a certain date, and calling all tenants of the lordship to attend. But few of us, it may be imagined, have ever given a thought to the meaning and associations which attach to these two things, great and little; or, indeed, have had any idea of any connection between the two. Yet they are not so far apart as they appear to be; and even a slight knowledge of the gradual growth of our legal system and its varieties is not so uninteresting or devoid of gleams of quaintness and humour as some might imagine.

As the necessity for laws and law-courts arose originally from evil ways moral and mental, so the necessity for the multiplicity of mediæval courts came very largely from another kind of evil ways—namely, bad highways and byways. For how could the poor man or the lowly, in any attempt to right his wrong by any

legal method, wend his way from the uttermost end of the realm to the place where the fountain of justice, the king, happened to be holding his court; or how could he follow it from shire to shire when roads were so rudimentary that most of them were passable only in summer; infested too with thieves and outlaws? And so, almost by natural causes as it were, in almost every vill or community of men arose those various courts whereunto the people might readily resort; which, from the primitive usage of judgment by the head of the family or tribe, evolved into the more organised forms—delegations from the King's High Court—of the Hallmote or Court-Baron; the Leet; the Hundred; and the County Courts. As a subsidiary cause for the multiplying of these courts it must not be forgotten that, necessary and beneficial as they were to the people, they were also a source of pecuniary profit to the lords who held them, from the lesser rural barons to the king, the supreme lord, himself. These profits varied considerably according to the population, the prosperity, or the poverty of the respective manors. They were derived from various items, from a twopenny amercement for leaving a ditch unscoured, to the more substantial sum of a 'relief' (usually a year's rent) accruing on the entry of an heir, or the forfeiture of the goods of a fugitive felon. The latter was, however, very often quite trifling in value. Thus, when a certain William Ryngwood, in the fifteenth century, fled from the manor of Glynde, in Sussex, there came to the lord, so the steward reported, 'a flich of bacon, value sixteenpence.'¹ Too often number made up for value; Peterborough records, for instance, giving a list of thirty manors in which eleven felons (nine of them thieves) were hung, one beheaded, and seventeen fugitives—sad example of cruel laws. The value of their chattels accruing to the Abbot ranged from 1*s.* to several instances of 4*l.*

How great a difference the population and prosperity, with other now unknown circumstances, could make in manorial receipts may be judged from comparison of the small amounts realised in the scattered and poorly populated Sussex manors of the Archbishops of Canterbury with the substantial sums accruing to the more wealthy and populous see of Winchester. In those cases which I have examined, a year's receipts from twenty or more courts in Sussex would be quite often equalled by the profits of one court of the Bishop of Winchester.

¹ 'Will^m Ryngwood fugam fecit pro feloniam per quod accedebat domino unum baconflyche ad valenciam XVI*d.*'

The *Hallmote*, or Court-Baron, was the court which every lord of a manor was empowered to hold over, and for, his own tenants, however few (so they be more than two) in his own demesne, however small. Originally he held this estate and jurisdiction by grant from the king himself as lord of the land and origin of office; and for this grant he owed fealty and military service. Those who held directly of the king were the 'tenants in capite.' They in their turn granted parts of their estates—for some of them held manors by the hundred—to others to be held of them by similar services, or more rarely by rent. Each of these lesser lords set up his local court, his *Hallmote*. As the word indicates, this court was a meeting or 'mote' of the lord (or his steward) and his tenants in the hall of the castle or manor-house, to receive homage, admit new tenants and transact business relating to the lordship. But 'there be lords many,' and manors more, and many of the latter did not contain a manor-house.

Thus Robert Count of Mortain (in the eleventh century)—albeit 'a man of crass and dull intellect,' as the historian tells us—was lord of eight hundred manors more or less, but it is highly improbable that he had a mansion in each. In such a case his courts would be held, at the usual times (properly twice a year), by the steward in his own dwelling or in some other suitable spot, such as the keeper's lodge. Thus, in connection with the numerous Sussex manors of the Archbishops of Canterbury, in few of which had they manor-houses, in two only palaces wherein they might lodge when visiting their 'peculiars,' we find in the mediæval court-rolls headings such as 'Stoneham Hallmote held at the old Lodge,' or 'Ringmer Hallmote held at the Broyle,' the latter being the name of a chace lying in that parish, containing two keepers' lodges, and a dwelling-house called Broyle Place. At Hemel Hempstead the Court-Baron was wont to be held in a loft over the market house called 'the courte-lofte.' At St. Edmunds Bury, as we shall see, certain courts of this nature were held in the cellarer's barn. To these courts came the free-tenants who held lands by fealty and services of a non-servile character, or by some small rent, and the villeins who held such lands as their lord allotted them, owing him therefor homage and services of a more or less arduous and arbitrary nature, and who could indeed be treated as chattels, and in some cases even pass by sale with the land from lord to lord. In these courts were transacted not only affairs personal to the lord and his tenants, such as transfer of holdings, default of homage, rent or cus-

tomary service, but also such matters as debts (under forty shillings), trespasses, in some manors probations of wills and the administration of the goods of intestates within the manor. In this court, too, the lord when so minded could manumit or liberate his serf, the new-made freeman in such case paying to his lord 'thirty pence—the price, namely, of his skin.' Here, too, were claimed various privileges and advantageous customs of the manor, such as that called 'chivage' when the villein desired a temporary freedom from his toil and from his confinement within the bounds of the manor. Thus, a Sussex court-roll of the time of Henry VI. records the granting of a Christmas holiday to a certain serf, who paid for this privilege six fowls to his lord.¹

But of all the varieties of business ever transacted in a Court-Baron the question which was tried between a certain Robert of Rotheram and John of Itham was the most extraordinary, and one which the jury of homagers dealt with in a quite masterly manner. A court-roll of the reign of Edward III. gravely tells in its prosaic Latin that 'Robert of Rotheram appeared against John of Itham in that he would not hold to his bargain made between them on a certain day by which the said John sold to the said Robert the Devil bound in a bond, for which the said Robert gave the said John a certain halfpenny as earnest whereby possession of the said Devil should be given within the fourth day next ensuing. On which day the said Robert came and sought possession of the aforesaid Devil according to the bargain made between them. But the said John would not give possession of the said Devil, to the great damage—namely, 50s.—of the aforesaid Robert. And the said John came and did not deny the bargain. Then because it seemed to the court that such a plea should not lie between Christians, therefore the aforesaid parties are adjourned to the Infernal regions for the plea to be heard, and each party is amerced twopence.' In all probability the Devil here involved was some object bewitched by magic charms, and contained in a box, a bottle, or receptacle of some sort.

Since, as we have seen, the lower lords set up their courts *ad libitum*, it is not surprising to find persons other than territorial lords holding 'hallmotes.'

Somner, in his history of Canterbury, speaks of the 'Halimot' of the cellarer of the monastery of Christchurch, 'holden of him in his proper hall,' over the numerous tribe of those serving in his

¹ 'Et rec^t VI capon de chivage Alexi Colbon nativi domini ut possit manere extra dominium ubi voluerit ad festum Nativitatis Domini.'

important department. So, too, Jocelin of Brakeland narrates how the cellarer of St. Edmunds had a messuage and barn 'where he was wont to hold his court solemnly touching thieves and all pleas and plaints';¹ a tolerably wide jurisdiction for such a court.

A variety or subdivision of the Court-Baron was the Pannage, Parrock, or Aves Court, held in those cases where the manor contained a chace or park, and which was concerned with matters arising out of the 'pannage' or feeding of swine in the park or chace, and the 'avesagium' or pasturage of animals other than swine therein. In connection with these matters disputes were continually liable to arise, as to the number or kind of animals turned out to pasture; and questions as to the payments to be made, or if any, for this privilege.

In process of time proceedings in these 'base' courts appear to have become very irregular, for pleas of debt and assault are recorded in some Sussex court-rolls of Queen Elizabeth's manors under the heading 'Pannage Court.'

Somewhat similar in nature, but regal in attributes, were the Forest Courts, such as the 'Regard' or chief court of a royal forest (*i.e.*, of all forests, for, with the exception of the Abbot of Whitby, no subject ever had lawful possession of a forest) held once in three years; and the swain-mote held three times a year, for the consideration of matters connected with the forests, in mediæval days involving questions of life and limb.

Leaving the Court-Baron and its varieties, we must now notice another kind of local and temporary tribunal—namely, the 'Dusty-foot,' or *Piepoudre Court*, which in mediæval times, when so much internal trade was transacted in numberless fairs, must have been as much a necessity as a convenience. In the words of Cowell, 'Piepowders court signifieth a court held in fairs for the redresse of all disorders committed within them . . . that a vagabond, especially a merchant that hath no place of dwelling . . . might have justice summarily ministered unto him—viz., within three flowings and three ebbings of the sea.' Doubtless this term was assigned to fit the average time-limit of a fair, most of them being held on the eve, the day, and the morrow of a saint.

Most ancient of courts was the *Leet* or *View of Frank-pledge*, which was instituted, as an ancient authority has it, 'for the ease of the people and especially of the husbandman, so that they should have justice done unto them at their own doors.' Formerly

¹ 'Ubi sollempniter curiam suam solebat tenere de latronibus, et omnibus placitis et querelis.'

it used to be held 'in the open air, upon a fair green, or under a large tree.'

In Sussex there are many instances of the open-air character of these courts. Until comparatively recent times a Court-Leet was held on the Thursday in Whitsun week on a large open common at Berwick, a parish lying between Lewes and Eastbourne.

Anciently these courts were sometimes held not only in churchyards but also in the churches themselves; a practice so undesirable that by Canon churchwardens were enjoined that they 'shall suffer no temporal courts, leets, or lay-juries' to be kept in the church, chapel, or churchyard. A yet more ancient decree in the Synod of Exon in 1287 declared that no fairs or secular law-courts shall be held in churches or the cemeteries thereof.¹

The proper times for holding these courts were soon after Easter, that they might not interfere with Lenten observance, and after the 'gule of August' (St. Peter ad vincula) that they might not hinder the harvest.

The 'View of Frank-pledge' was by no means the least important part of these courts. As the name implies, it was a view, review, or muster of the men of the hamlets or vills, tythings or 'decennæ'—probably representing groups of ten families—who for the maintenance of the 'king's peace' and the public security were mutually pledges for each other's good behaviour. By King Alfred it was ordained that no one above the age of fourteen years was to dwell in any parish in the realm—except men passing to fairs, pilgrims, and messengers—unless he be enrolled in some 'dozen' or frank-pledge. A modified rule of the time of Henry III. decreed that no strangers shall be harboured in villages beyond one day—or two at the most—except at harvest time, unless their hosts became responsible for them;² the same regard being thus manifested for agricultural operations as was shown in fixing the dates of holding the courts.

The Leet was properly a court belonging to the Crown, and could only be held by lower lords by royal grant, or immemorial custom. Its business was of a very comprehensive character. Having made inquiry 'whether all the chief pledges be come to the view,' they were called upon to make 'presentments' of royal rights withheld, as wardship, relief; of sorcerers; usurers; clippers and forgers of coin; incendiaries; shedding of blood; false weights

¹ 'Ne in ecclesiis vel cœmeteriis earum mercata vel placita sæcularia teneantur.'

² 'Quod nullus extraneus receptetur in villis campestribus ultra unum diem vel duos ad plus extra tempus messium nisi hospes pro illo velit respondere.'

and measures ; of ' misdoers in parks, coneyburrows and fishponds ' ; new customs arising ; and ditches not scoured. The dual nature of this court is thus shown, partly regal, partly dominical. Here are some instances of actual occurrences at one of these Courts Leet of the time of Queen Elizabeth :

The jurors ' presented ' that

' A. & B. drew blood upon C. with a sword. Therefore they are amerced and the sword is forfeit to the lord.

' That a black ox came astray & it is committed to the bailiff to proclaim the same in the church and within the market as the custom is.

' That a certain A. B. did with force of arms wilfully and feloniously burn the house of C. D. contrary to the peace of our lady the Queen, therefore the bailiff is commanded to seize his goods & chattels that he may answer to the lord of the manor.

' That E. F. on a certain day feloniously took & carried away a certain fallow-deer, tame and bearing a bell about its neck, the chattel of one G. H., against the peace of our lady the Queen, her crown & dignity.

' That J. K. of sound mind and good health is a vagabond who wakes by night and sleeps by day and nothing labours therefore he is amerced.

' That L. M. is a butcher & takes excessive profit.'

Another court, similar in scope and function to the Leet, was the *Sheriff's Turn*, held in such districts as were not served by a Court-Leet.

Higher than the Court-Baron in antiquity and jurisdiction, and wider in scope than the Court-Leet, was the *Hundred Court*.

It was properly held twelve times a year, or, as the old phraseology has it, ' from three weeks to three weeks.'

It was also held at other than these usual periods by royal summons to try special issues. Very ancient in origin, it is doubtless the ' folc-mote ' of the Saxons, and during their *régime* was attended by clerical as well as lay persons, the bishop and the baron jointly presiding, and affairs ecclesiastical as well as secular being transacted therein.

After the Conquest William separated these jurisdictions, and by the same enactment fixed the fine for non-attendance, the penalty for default after due summons being ' an ox and in addition a forfeiture to the King.'

As regards the origin of the title of this court there is some difficulty in attempting a definition. That the ' Hundreds ' into

which England was long ago, and now is, divided, originally had reference to a hundred units of some kind is obvious; but that it ever meant a hundred hides or a Hundred villis is doubtful. For in the first case the Hundred would be too small, in the latter much too large, to approximate in any reasonable degree to the average Hundred of history. Like the Leet, the Hundred Court was very commonly, in its origin doubtless exclusively, held in the open air. The numbers attending would be too large to accommodate themselves to the average baronial hall; while, properly speaking, the court was not of the same proprietary nature as the Hallmote, though in process of time the baron became lord of the Hundred in most cases, as well as of the manor. A very usual place for the assembly of the Hundred was a hill, a mount, a common, or a spot made conspicuous by some great, venerable, or historic tree.

As regards the first of these, the ancient term '*Mallobergium*,' which was applied to these primitive assemblies, means the '*Burg* (or hill) of assembly' of the people; for at such a place, under the open sky, on elevated and oftentimes fortified spots, would primitive tribes choose to hold their council meetings. On the downs between Lewes and Brighton, at a spot called '*Younsmere Pit*,' Hundred Courts were held until quite recent times; while on those smooth green hills between Seaford and Beddingham is a spot called '*Five Lords' Burg*,' which doubtless is so named because there were formerly held the Hundred Courts over the five neighbouring lordships which went to make up the territorial Hundred. Near Uckfield, in the same county, is a spot, now covered with coppice, called the '*Five Hundreds*.' At Hastings an open spot at the bottom of the High Street was called the '*Hundred Place*,' and there 'from time out of mind,' as a custom as old as the reign of Edward III. tells us, the commonalty were wont to assemble at the sound of a horn to choose their bailiff for the year.

Trees have been for so many ages used as romantic trysting-places that it is small wonder that they should have served also as rendezvous for more prosaic purposes. In Domesday Book we read of Hundred Courts being held at '*the Naked Thorn-tree*' (in Berkshire), and at an apple-tree (in Derbyshire); the latter tree very frequently indicating the chosen spot, since a '*Hoar apple-tree*' so often served in ancient times as a boundary mark. '*Under the Oak of Greywood*' the Hundred Courts of Freebridge continued to be held as late as the seventeenth century. Coventry,

that ancient 'City of the three spires,' is said to derive its name from a word signifying hollow tree. And in St. Michael's churchyard there once stood a venerable tree near which local courts were wont to be held.

Doubtless the Hundred Courts were those 'secular courts' which, as we have seen, the Synod of 1287 forbade to be held in churchyards; and the presumption is that the practice of so holding them was far from uncommon.

Among some court-rolls of the fifteenth century I have come across one instance of such a usage. It is headed '*Lewes*, a court held there on 20th day of September in the sixth year of the reign of King Edward IV. in the cemetery of St. John-under-the-castle.'¹

This affords a remarkable instance of a court being held in a place of military strength. For this churchyard of St. John's once formed an ancient camp of great natural strength, 'more ancient' (as has been somewhat needlessly observed by a writer of Lewes history) 'than any of the walls or ramparts of the town whose ruins are still extant.' It occupies a spot of an oval shape whose northern extremity is an abrupt and almost inaccessible slope, while raised earthworks and a foss on the southern side curved round to meet the lessening slope of the ground on the west and east. Here, no doubt, in prehistoric times, the Britons had a stronghold, looking out over the Ouse valley, which was then a wide estuary of the sea reaching almost to the base of this camp. Later on in time this estuary became first a swamp and then a marsh, and even in the fourteenth century was sufficiently impassable under ordinary conditions to make it necessary for the monks of Malling (located on the other side of the Ouse) to construct a causeway and a bridge of wood across the sundering marsh and river. Anciently these Folcmotes, these Hundred Courts, were summoned by no long legal premonition, but by such methods as would be understood of the people; by such primitive means, for instance, as by blowing a far-resounding horn, or ringing a clangorous bell. The latter method is at least as old as the Confessor, for he ordained that on an emergency arising in a burg immediately bells should be rung 'quod vocant Motbel' to call together 'omnes et universi' to the assembly 'quod Anglice vocant Folcmote.' Jocelin of Brakelond,

¹ 'Lewes Curia tenta ibidem xx. die Septembris anno regni regis Edwardi IIII VI^o ad cimiterium ecclesie sancti Johannis sub castro.'

in his Chronicle, tells us of the two elected burgesses one of whose duties was to blow the horn 'quod dicitur mot-horn.'

The Burg-mote (the Folcmote of a walled town) of Canterbury was summoned by the sound of the horn; and doubtless such was the signal that assembled in the cemetery of the Dominicans the citizens of that no mean city in the year of grace 1328 to concert measures against the monks of Christchurch who had refused to share in providing aid to the King for his Scottish expedition.

The men of the Cinque Ports also were called together by their barons blowing on the same unmusical instrument. In some municipalities these horns are still preserved as memorials of the past.

So, too, the folcmotes of the citizens of London were wont to assemble, their usual rendezvous being the cross or the cemetery of St. Paul's Cathedral, a place admirably suited for such a purpose, standing as it did in the heart of the city and on an eminent spot. Sometimes these motes were held within and not outside a church, in spite of the Canon, as in 1258, when 'the King himself sat at a Folcmote of the citizens held in the Temple church of the Knights of Jerusalem,' while in the same troublous reign the churches of Holy Trinity within the city and Barking were used upon occasion for such secular meetings.

Having said something of these courts, Baron, Leet and Hundred, there remains only to mention the *County Court*, the 'Scyre-court,' of the Saxons. Sometimes it appears to have been composed of the chief men of three or more Hundreds, a kind of joint committee of Hundreds, under the presidency of the Count or his sheriff. Thus we find William Rufus issuing a writ, 'cause to assemble and sit three Hundreds and a half at Flichehanchurch concerning the land which the Abbot of Ramsey claims for the clothing and victualling of his monks.' In this manner they appear to have been used as registers of the transfer of real property. Thus, in the reign of Henry II., Robert and Sybilla de Dene granted the rectory, lands, and tithes of Waldron to the Priory of St. Pancras, Lewes, the deed to this purpose being made 'coram duobus Hundredis, apud Handestuph.' In Domesday we read that Wulstan, Bishop of Worcester, had established his title to certain lands before Queen Matilda 'in the presence of four shires.' Anciently they were of somewhat limited jurisdiction; but since 1848 their powers have been amplified, including that for which they are so often invoked—namely,

questions of debt under fifty pounds. Allied in nature to the County Courts were the 'Iters' of the 'Justiciarii itinerantes' who perambulated six groups of counties, from Henry II.'s reign until the time of Edward III., when their 'Iters' became 'Assises.' The 'Iter' of the metropolitan counties was held 'at the Stone Cross near the Maypole in the Strand.'

There is one curious court which cannot be passed over in any description of these ancient courts, and that is the 'Curia Sine Lege,' or Lawless Court, which, from a very early date, was wont to be held for the lord of Raleigh, on King's Hill, Rochford, in Essex, on the Wednesday next after Michaelmas Day. Presided over by the steward—for we can hardly expect the lord of the manor would leave a comfortable couch to sit in the open air at the chilly hour of dawn—the tenants, who had been summoned by the clarion of the cock,¹ performed their due 'suit and service,' and the usual business was transacted without pen and ink or candles, and in whispers; all defaulters forfeiting to the lord a double rent for every hour of absence.

This curious custom is said to have been imposed on the tenants for conspiring at a similar early hour to raise a commotion in the manor.

Such is some of the history of our less-known courts of law—courts which played a valuable part in the life of the nation under conditions now, in the main, passed away. From them has developed the more complicated modern legal system. The wandering Court of the King, or Aula Regis, became the Court of King's Bench,² subsequently further modified; Quarter Sessions were instituted; and the less important matters dealt with of old in Leets and Courts-Baron now come under the jurisdiction of Benches of Magistrates.

W. HENEAGE LEGGE.

¹ 'Toties voluerit,
Gallus ut cantaverit;
Per cujus solum sonitum
Curia est summonita.'

² In the seventeenth year of King John it was determined that 'communia placita non sequerentur curiam (Regis) sed in loco certo tenerentur.'

At the Sign of the Ship.

A NUMBER of good new books, not novels, have appeared lately, and I present my sympathetic condolences to authors who write for an age recalcitrant to every book that is not a romance, or a tract in disguise. Mr. Wilkins, author of *A Queen of Tears*,¹ perhaps hardly needs our regrets, because, though his strange and melancholy tale is true, candid persons who venture to look into it will admit that it is 'as good as a novel.' What more can you say for a study in history? I have heard a worthy lady remark, at a Private View in Burlington House, that a certain picture was 'as good as a sermon.' In her mind applause here reaches the Pillars of Hercules; for of all things sermons are the best, and the picture was as good as a sermon.

* * *

Mr. Wilkins, however, has certainly to contend against the modern prejudice that what is true cannot be otherwise than tedious, cannot conceivably compete in interest with what Mr. Brown and Mrs. Green have invented, 'all out of their own heads.' Yet Mr. Anthony Hope has not invented any wild romance of Zenda, or other Utopia, which can compete for pathos and strangeness with this true tale of *A Queen of Tears*, a sister of douce, decent George III., whose own life was conspicuously unromantic. Caroline Matilda (born in 1751) was the youngest child of Prince Fred, celebrated as he 'who was alive and is dead.' The Prince of Wales *de facto* was by no means so pretty a fellow as the Prince of Wales *de jure* Charles Edward. I chance to possess medals of both, Charles in silver, Fred in copper feebly silvered over. Fred has a long ugly nose, and a strangely protrusive underlip. Yet one does not see, nor does Mr. Wilkins, why he has such a bad reputation in history. He was not unkind, he behaved well to Flora Macdonald. He rather loved a tartan waistcoat, he was a cricketer, and he died of an injury from a cricket-ball. He was not very wise, but who can blame him for being on the worst terms with his father, George II.? That was inevitable; George was bound to hate his eldest son.

¹ *A Queen of Tears: Caroline Matilda, Queen of Denmark and Norway*, by W. H. Wilkins, M.A., F.S.A.

Poor Fred's little daughter, Matilda, was betrothed, as a child, to King Christian of Denmark, who was mad, and bad, and weak, and cruel, and such a fool that he thought it 'the thing' to neglect a pretty young bride, and to remove from her a dragon of a *chaperon*, to whom, dragon as she was, the young Queen was attached. Christian was, if possible, a more utterly worthless prince than Queen Mary's husband, Darnley, and more cannot be said. The young princess was handed over to this worm against her will, whereas Mary chose Darnley, and was in love with him. Matilda never had a chance to love the wretched royal Dane, who really grew insane in that half-hearted way which did not make it easy to lock him up for life. He was not precisely *fou à lier*: he was just mad enough to break a wife's heart and ruin a country, without being mad enough for Bedlam. The little wretch, visiting England, was very popular as 'the Northern Scamp.' As in fairy tales, the young English bride suffered from an odious, jealous mother-in-law.

* . *

She was but eighteen when she had a severe illness, like Queen Mary at Jedburgh before Darnley's murder. She rose from her sick bed to find her husband a driveller as well as a caitiff; she had prayed in vain for death, and now she determined to live for herself at last. Of course, such a queen, young, charming, clever, with a heart untouched, found her Bothwell—such a Bothwell! not even a gentleman. Struensee was a travelling German doctor. The Queen disliked him at first as a favourite of her husband, but she saw him in his medical capacity; the more she liked him the more the King chuckled, and Struensee made her the tool of his ambition. No woman ever loved more loyally, and no man, not even Bothwell, ever repaid a woman's love with such unspeakable infamy and baseness. Here the story, if a novel, would seem incredible or improbable, but it is an over-true tale. Struensee had not the nerve to blow the King up in a Danish Kirk o' Field; perhaps one would detest him rather less if he had done so. His *coup d'état*, which practically made him a despot, a reforming despot, was a stroke beyond the reach even of Bothwell; there was no conceivable way of putting the nobles of Scotland under such a man's feet. The audacity of Struensee for his hour was only equalled by the abjectness of his debasement, when, *à la* Mr. Anthony Hope, he was seized after a State ball, whereon he deserted and denounced the Queen, and, in

his blue cut-velvet coat and pink silk breeches, was brought to the scaffold, as he richly deserved to be.

* * *

It is not easy, except for the circumstances of her youth, and misery, and isolation, to forgive the Queen's passion for this wretch, who dominated and betrayed her. The Hepburn, at least, was of an old house, needed no new coat of arms, and had done much to win the gratitude of Mary among faithless nobles and frenzied preachers. Poor Matilda also was preached at in prison, like Mary in Loch Leven Castle. She had but one friend, the English ambassador, Keith, a kinsman of the Earl-Marischal. He put something of his own heart into George III., the Queen's brother, and a threat to bombard Copenhagen brought the Danish Government to its knees. Naturally, the Opposition at once became pro-Dane. Oh England! oh my country, how *pro* the other side always is! But Queen Charlotte, who, of course, hated her sisters-in-law, would not allow Matilda to return to England. 'The King did not venture to stand up against the tempest of her virtuous indignation,' and Matilda expiated in Hanover the crime of being young, and fair, and misused, and deserted, and a woman. She grew rather stout, and died very young, while a plot for her restoration was hatching. How could she wish to go back? Probably to be revenged on her mother-in-law; it was hardly human not to want that enjoyment. With Königsmarck and Struensee, the Georgian ladies were very unfortunate in their lovers. We look so regularly to the Stuarts for royal romances that Mr. Wilkins has been the first historian to use the English despatches on this woeful affair, though, I presume, they are concealed in no more recondite place than the Record Office.

* * *

What is it in human nature that would make Mr. Wilkins's excellent and original work so much more popular if he had turned it into a novel? Probably the reason is that the novelist does the imaginative work for his readers; he gives fancied conversations, as the old historians, Thucydides and Tacitus, gave fancied speeches, whereas, in reading history, the student has to use his own fancy in reconstructing all the minor details. We are all lazy, and our mental food is most relished when it is prepared in the manner of a South Sea Island beverage, for which the works of travellers may be consulted. This explanation goes

but a little way, for indeed I know not what it is that keeps our attention fixed on a novel which, even as we read it, we heartily despise for its glaring faults of construction and wild abuse of coincidence. I am reading such a romance just now. It is contemptible, and interests me extremely. I cannot explain the facts, but incline to attribute them to original sin.

* * *

If we talk of history, what can be more thrillingly sensational than the *Annals* of Tacitus? The events are of an actuality as exciting as the murder of the Servian King and Queen; there is all the poignancy of a scandalous chronicle, all is as modern as if we were reading a story of the Court of Louis XV. The narrator is the wisest and wittiest of men, a master of irony, and yet—I have not read Tacitus since I was in the schools. Mere laziness forbids: there is no other excuse.

* * *

One is reminded of Tacitus by Professor Ramsay's new translations of the *Annals* (John Murray). The Introduction, on the influence of Tacitus and on his translators, is full of interest. Napoleon conceived a personal pique against him as an enemy of Imperial Government, and would have been glad to see the recent whitewashings of Tiberius, whom Bishop Burnet thought so like Charles II. in person. They had not much else in common; and Tiberius, unlike Charles, was not a popular man. I wonder if Mr. Ramsay has noticed that Ségur's account of Napoleon's Moscow campaign closely imitates the manner of Tacitus, especially in assigning a string of possible motives, all discreditable, for everything that the Emperor does. It is supposed to be impossible to translate Tacitus, who is so terse and pregnant, and has phrases no more to be adequately reproduced than the style of Shakespeare or of Virgil. I doubt if Professor Ramsay should use a word like 'shove' in translating Tacitus. Such a phrase as 'created some amusement' does not strike one as Tacitean. 'Without securing any corresponding benefit to the public' has also a familiar air, and may be apt to suggest a leading article. But the point is that Professor Ramsay's version, if we read it as a book, and not for the amiable purpose of picking holes, may be perused with pleasure for the contents alone, which are of unparalleled interest. Look at the story of the slave who appeared as a pseudo-Agrippa, for example: there is indeed a romantic and ingenious pretender, more than a match for the ex-tailor's advertisement, Perkin Warbeck. The notes

make everything clear, and I cannot see that the scholarly care for a sound rendering hampers the march of the narrative. Tacitus complains that he has to write of dull times, partly because Tiberius 'had no interest in the expansion of the Empire,' was 'a little Englander,' as Mr. Ramsay remarks. It is odd to find Tacitus taking this view of history, but certainly he is the reverse of dull, and Mr. Ramsay has made him current coin.

* * *

If anyone wants lighter literature—and I do not say that one can read Tacitus for very long at a time, any more than one can read a large number of sonnets—he can try Mr. Walter Pollock's *Animals that have Owned us*. This is indeed a charming little book on the humours of animals, among whom I find Betsy the Hen as mysteriously interesting as Elizabeth Canning, that inscrutable heroine. Whence did she come, a 'valuable hen,' like Betsy, and lay her daily egg persistently in a deserted little back garden? She may have been moved by a passion for Mr. Pollock, like the hen which developed an ardent affection for Sir Walter Scott. Betsy had feline characteristics and was fond of fish, which, in an undomesticated state, the ancestral *poulet sauvage* can never have tasted. She robbed a cat, a big cat, of a chicken bone, this endophagous fowl. The worst of our animals is that their histories all end ill, so quickly brother follows brother from sunlight to the shadow land. Mr. Pollock's dogs illustrated the variety of the 'homing' faculty in dogs. One would lose himself in Kensington High Street, another would find his way in Paris, where he had never been before. But Mr. Pollock does not go deep into this mysterious question of 'homing,' much discussed of late by French men of science. Probably animals differ as much as men in this gift. I have known a person of great learning who could not find his own way down Cromwell Road, and, at night, was often 'lost in London.' Want of observation and short sight explain these things, and Mr. Pollock's dog, who always was lost, had the malady of ingrowing eyelashes. Yet we usually think that dogs trust mainly to their noses. How can we account for a parrot which once, and only once, exclaimed, 'Oh, my God!' He might do good work as a tract. This fowl might have converted Colonel Gardiner. The Australian blacks have a legend that a wild dog was once heard to speak, but he said just what one might have expected—namely, 'Bones!' Those who heard him were turned into rocks, which makes it hard to see where the evidence for the incident was obtained. Of Mr. Pollock's

cats, one which saw ghosts in broad daylight was perhaps the most peculiar. Cats differ in behaviour when ghosts appear to human eyes. One, in a book of Mr. J. G. Wood's, nearly went mad with terror, leaping up the walls, but then the ghost, according to the human percipient, was a very ugly specimen. On the other hand, a dog, and a canary, and a human percipient have been much alarmed by a ghost, while a cat, also present, merely sat tight, keeping a watchful eye on the visitor. Jeremy Taylor mentions a female ghost whom a dog, normal, accompanied in a friendly way, but I have heard of another dog which jumped up on a ghost, and was much alarmed when his paws encountered nothing material. I had been staying at the house where this occurred, but saw nothing unusual, except a basket rolling about of its own mere motion. But this was explained; there was a kitten in that basket. What one cannot explain is why home-lovers, as cats are, occasionally come, perfectly sleek, fat, and comfortable, from a place where they have manifestly been well treated, and take up their abode with perfect strangers. The least effusive cat I ever knew came there to luncheon, and stayed, an object of respect and awe, rather than of affection, for, I suppose, at least a dozen years—in fact, till he went *où vont les roses*, and where creeds go, and dynasties, and scientific theories, and Tullus and Ancus.

* * *

The last on my list of new books, *The Sons o' Cormac*, by Mr. Aldin Dunbar,¹ seems to me a delightfully original example of narrative style. We hear a great deal, and do not read very much, of the 'Irish Literary Revival,' or Celtic Renaissance. The Irish, from an unknown date, have had a very rich store of legendary and mythical heroic tales, just as the Greeks had. But Ireland never possessed a Homer, who could give immortal form and music to stories which, in themselves, are perhaps as good as the Greek legends were before Homer took them up into the clear atmosphere of his epics. I do not exactly know the literary history of the Irish heroic legends as they exist in manuscript; doubtless they have been worked over by narrators in various ages, shaped and reshaped to meet shifting tastes that no longer exist. They have in rich measure the 'natural magic' about which Mr. Matthew Arnold wrote, and they are mysteriously haunted by whispers out of ancient times not understood, voices that, save in Welsh and Gaelic, have left no other echoes. But the legends have also faults of incoherence, of long dull passages; they are dim

¹ Longmans.

and vaporous, with a glow here and there, as when a stray sun-beam, in a day of rain, falls on the red clusters of the rowan-trees above the white fall of waters in a corry. There is a tendency to childlike exaggeration: the heroes do things that are incredibly big, not great, leap impossible distances, slay incredible numbers of the enemy; such things are frequent and tedious in the rambling 'epics' of Hindustan, there is too much of them in the battle scene of the 'Song of Roland'; there is no such matter in the northern sagas of the Scandinavian peoples, just as there is no such magic. The Irish legends have, at some time, passed through incompetent hands.

* * *

Mr. Dunbar has presented the legends properly in *The Sons o' Cormac*. He makes an old Irish gardener tell some of the tales to his master's children. He tells them simply, lucidly, naturally, and briefly, so that a child is not puzzled, while any 'grown-up' may read without thinking that he is being 'written down to.' There is plenty of Irish humour of an unforced kind, and, what is more surprising, the poetical quality, the 'natural magic,' is preserved by a touch here and there, with not a tinge of the mediocre artificial poetising that pervades the most impossible class of books—modern fairy tales, all about flowers, and dew, and sunset. In fact, Mr. Dunbar's book might be called a *tour de force* if it were not so simple and natural. The truth is that, by a fortunate inspiration, he has hit on the right method of narrative. He has kept all that is best, or that children can appreciate, of the old work; he has disengaged the gold from the too craggy and copious quartz. The fairies here are genuine: the Good People, the Little People, in whom many Irish peasants believe as firmly as in the Irish Constabulary. This gives backbone to the narratives, gives them the quality of credibility which children desire. The Little People are no fantasies, but have their rules and regular way of life, like the beasts in *The Jungle Book*, while the author has the art of making you believe that his heroines are beautiful, and his heroes are individual human beings, like Desmond of the Bow and Eileen Cold Heart. It has been my lot to read the old fairy tales of the world, and I rank these, though the *genre* is different, with Grimm's, and Perrault's, and the *Tales from the Norse*, and Kingsley's *Heroes*, which do for the Greek what Mr. Dunbar does for the old Celtic. They are literature, these legends, and not mere prizes for the Folk-Lorist, that redoubted being, who hath not 'art or part' in them.

Perhaps the following anecdote has been published before; it is new to me. A man and wife in town were congratulating themselves just before dinner on dining, for once, alone and at home. To them enter another man and his wife, who were neither known nor looked for, and had obviously come to the wrong house—a thing that will happen in London. The hosts dissembled and welcomed them (a thing that, as a matter of fact, does occur), and all went smoothly till the ladies left the drawing-room. Then the guest turned to the host, and said with emotion, 'Now, do tell me the whole story about poor Sophia.' (I alter the name.) What was the host to do? With presence of mind he replied, 'It is really too painful. I hope you will excuse me.' 'Oh, certainly, certainly,' said the guest, 'I would not be curious,' and he changed the subject. When the guests had gone, and the hosts were wondering, a servant brought an envelope which the guests had left. It was addressed in pencil, *For Sophia*, and contained a handful of bank-notes. Now, the hosts knew neither the name nor address of the guests, and they vainly advertised for them. Puzzle for Sherlock Holmes, to find out the adventure of poor Sophia.

* * *

The affair resembles, distantly, one which I know to be true. Two ladies were asked to call on an old lady by some common friend of hers and theirs. She turned out to be quite deaf and very short-sighted. She took them for other people, they never knew for whom, and, for a mortal half-hour, kept repeating that Philip was very well, Philip should always be welcome, but as for his brother Guy, after what Guy had done, he should never enter her home again. She renounced for ever Guy and all his works. Can Guy have betrayed or otherwise injured poor old Sophia? We live in a mystery.

ANDREW LANG.

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